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WHEN THE RED GODS CALL

BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

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WHEN THE RED GODS CALL

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BY

BEATRICE GRIMSHAW
AUTHOR OF "FIJI AND ITS POSSIBILITIES," "NEW GUINEA," ETC.

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He must go—go—go away from here!
On the other side the world he's overdue.
'Send your road is clear before you when the old
Spring fret comes o'er you,
And the Red Gods call for you!

KIPLING

WHEN THE RED GODS CALL

PART I

HUGH LYNCH'S STORY

CHAPTER I

I AM writing this in prison.

I don't know that anyone will ever read it, but if anyone ever should, he need not picture to himself a cell in Portland or Wormwood Scrubbs, with a gas jet, and a Bible, and a spy-hole in the door, and a warder walking up and down outside. It is a very different sort of prison that holds me, Hugh Lynch — thirty-one years of age, and good for nothing any more — this dead, damp, choking-hot "northwestern" afternoon. The walls are corrugated iron, whitewashed, and very clean; there is a sleeping mat on the floor, and a pillow and a box and a tin basin. The window is an open shutter, looking out to sea. I could break through it, or the floor, with a penknife, any night — supposing Wilks, the jailer, had not left the door open, as he generally does. Wilks is lazy, and does not much like the bother of having a white prisoner; he put me on parole the first day I was here, so that he should not be troubled to look after me. A cheap parole, truly! Where could a man escape to, in British New Guinea, as it remains even in this last quarter of the nineteenth century —

an unexplored wilderness of cannibal savages, about the last place on the face of God's earth.

People who are alive some twenty years hence may have a different tale to tell. A man has plenty of time to think in prison, and a pioneer has some right to prophesy. I would stake — what have I got to stake? Honor? "He that died o' Wednesday" may have it, not I, who live disgraced. Money? The crash that brought me here carried away that too; let it go — it's the least thing a man can lose. Love? Not safe to think about here, Hugh, while Wilks obligingly leaves you the use of your razor. Well, then, freedom, the only star in my black sky — a star a long way off. . . . I would stake my freedom that this wild country will be a great colony some day.

Who knows it as I do? Who has paid so for what he knows? Half drowned a dozen times on the river bars — nearly eaten by alligators oftener than I could remember — speared by a black brute in Orangerie Bay — caught and tied up for cooking on Ferguson Island — starved to a skeleton exploring in the Owen Stanley Range — down with fever gold-hunting in the wood-larks, in the Louisiades, up the Mambare River. Well, I'm not writing a boys' adventure book, but I never read one that had half the adventures in it I have had in this out-of-the-way, back-of-God-speed, dark, devilish hole of a British New Guinea.

. . . Which, in spite of all the names I call it, and all it has done to me, I can't help liking, even yet. That's the way with us in New Guinea — we

sow for someone else to reap. What have I reaped out of my six years in the country? Well, that is what I set out to write; I shall come to it by and by.

The days here are so long, in spite of the odd jobs of whitewashing, gardening, and grooming given me by the jailer, that I have felt obliged to make some occupation for the empty hours. I begged an old ledger, only quarter filled, from Wilks to-day, and in that I am going to write down, day by day, as time may serve, the whole truth about my wretched story — partly for my own employment, and partly because . . .

No, I won't write that second "because." I don't care if she ever does know. I don't care if she is dead. No more about her! I write to please myself, no one else.

How quiet the prison is! It is the hottest hour of the afternoon, the parrots have ceased their screaming in the bush that lies behind the hill, the leatherheads have not yet begun their evening squawking and scandalizing among the palm-tree tops. All the native prisoners are out working on the roads; Wilks, I suspect, is taking an afternoon nap after his midday "comforter." There is not a sound but the humming of the surf on the coral reef, a long way out at sea, and the little ruffle of the waves breaking on the beach below the jail. The sea is of a blue that hits you like a slap in the face; the white sand scorches your eyes, the tangle of bush and creepers on the shore is poisonously green. One can only say that

the whole landscape screams, in spite of the stillness of the day.

Port Moresby is out of sight round the corner — half a dozen tin bungalows with stilty legs and big verandas, offices, some of them, a store or two, a house or two — that is all. And here, on the grass below the "capitol," stands the jail, my home.

Who and what am I, and why am I here? A page copied out of Wilks' rough-and-ready prison register will answer. I'm not a young lady in a novel, so I cannot very well describe myself, but I think Wilks has done it accurately enough.

"LYNCH, Hugh. White. Age 31. Nationality, Irish. Crime, manslaughter. Sentence, two years.

"Description — Height, 5 feet 8½. Hair, dark red, very thick. Face much tanned. Eyes small, grayish-brown. Clean shaved. Wide mouth, good teeth. Nose short and irregular. Small ears. Exceptional development of muscle all over. Somewhat round-shouldered.

"Marks — Knife scar on left shoulder. Spear mark right thigh. Tattooing — Dragon left forearm; mermaid, red and blue on back; snake (blue) encircling right upper arm; "Panchita M." center of chest; "Armour éternal, 1887," enclosed in circle (red) over left breast; girl's head in a crescent moon (blue) over fourth rib, right side. Device apparently erased with acid, just above.

"Speaks French and Spanish, also Motuan and several other New Guinea dialects."

. . . . I had just got so far, when the doctor came in on a visit of inspection. He was a little drunk, as usual, and very pleasant; I think his grammar was rather worse than usual (when an Irishman is vulgar be sure he's an Ulsterman, like M'Gonigal), and he was much inclined to talk. He took Wilks' ledger off the floor, where it lay while I was copying, seated on my mat, and began to read it aloud with shrieks of laughter. Wilks, who had followed, stood sheepishly looking on, his mouth full of afternoon tea.

"'Nose irregular,'" read the doctor; "'exceptional muscular development.' Them two things hangs together, me boy; you're apt to find an irregular nose with an arm and a chest like yours, and the rid hair that shows the fiery timper. . . . 'Round-shouldered'—Ignor-ramus! did j'ever see a Herkewls with the carriage of a Ganymede, now?"

"No, sir, certainly not, sir," says poor Wilks, hopelessly muddled.

"'. . . Speaks Spanish—"Panchita"—speaks French—"Amour éternal"—girl in a crescent—girl, or something about a girl, burned out—knife wound on the left shoulder'—and them hangs together too, ye Lutherian! Why, it's a biography ye've written, here, Wilks . . . Manslaughter . . . hm! hm! Give us a sup of the tea ye have in your quarters, Mr. Jailer, with the flavoring that I perceive ye've been adding to it—and we'll let the lad alone; after all, we don't an-natomise a criminal before he's dead, even in British New Guinea."

I was afraid the doctor would begin overhauling my manuscript, but he never even glanced at it — he has more refinement of feeling than his grammar might lead one to expect. He walked out of the cell, still laughing, and Wilks followed him, carrying his register with him. It ought never to have been there, but there is not much prison discipline in Port Moresby.

Alone again in my little whitewashed box, with not a sound to disturb me but the dry rustle of the palms outside, I sat and thought for a long time, looking out at the flat blue sea. There was a lakatoi on it a little while ago — a huge canoe with immense curved bat-like wings, skimming along towards Paga Hill. There was a thin black streak, far out at sea, followed by a long crystal wake — that was an alligator, going after the lakatoi. I watched them both out of sight; the sea is empty now, and I have taken up my pen again.

I think that the doctor spoke the truth. Wilks has written a pretty large slice of my autobiography for me. I'll let it go at that.

Three years before the mast at sea — a year in Ecuador and Bolivia — another in Tahiti and New Caledonia — another in Australia — six in New Guinea. That's the tale, in the rough. A gentleman to begin with, a County Clare lad meant for the army, and brought home from his tutor's at eighteen to be told that his father was dead, his property muddled away, and himself a beggar — that was the beginning of life for Hugh Lynch. I had an uncle on

my mother's side (she had died long before the black days came on us, thank God) and he found a place for me in a Liverpool warehouse as a junior clerk. I kept the place just ten days. The eleventh day found me berthed in the forecastle of a five hundred ton brig, bound for Buenos Aires — entered on the books as an able seaman, and well worth my wages, too; I hadn't sailed my father's yacht round Ireland, and up to Stromness, for nothing. As for the senior clerk in Pettigrew's of Water Street, he probably got a couple of new front teeth from the dentist near the Town Hall, next Saturday, and I don't think the split in his lip would bother him for more than a day or two. All things considered, he was lucky.

Was I?

Well, for the next few years, "all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them," were mine. If I paid the price one is supposed to pay, I got what I paid for. They say the devil is fond of cheating you out of the goods you've bought. He did not cheat me.

There's a good deal one does not care to think of in cool blood, about the history of those years. If I told the story of the knife scar that I shall carry to my grave, and the story of the little wooden cross in the big barranco beyond La Paz, that goes with it — if I wrote down everything that happened in that mutiny off the Chilian coast, who sunk the *Señorita,* and why, and what you'd find tied to the main-mast, if you got a diving dress, and went down to look, and why I would not take the governorship of

the island, if it were offered me, to go back and live in Tahiti — if I wrote all that, and the rest, that I haven't touched on, there'd be more biography on the paper, and of a queerer kind, than ever M'Gonigal professes to have found on my skin.

You see, I had the education of a gentleman, and the muscles of a strong man in a circus, and the salt drop in the blood that drives to wandering. Mix those together, and you'll get a stew with pepper in it. There has been nothing mean or dishonest in my life, but I'm afraid that is the very best my very best friend could say for me. And if I have not succeeded in unclassing myself altogether, I have gone a long way toward it. Whether that is an advantage or not, is one of the things I have never been able to decide. At all events it is so, beyond altering. Of no class, no country, no home, and no future — that is what I am, and where the "Red Gods" have led me, at the last.

And now for the story!

It begins three years ago, when I came into Port Moresby to look for a wife. I had taken up the prettiest little group of islands a man ever saw, ten or fifteen miles from the mainland of the northeast coast, and had planted them with cocoanuts. There was pearl-shell in the center lagoon, and fine Turkey sponge near the outer reef, and hawksbill turtle all over the place. I had had a house built of native materials, a little brown home like a bird's nest, set among the big palms that had been growing on the island for half a century, with my new young trees

behind it, and the beach and the lagoon before. After a long day overseeing the work of the boys, I used to light my pipe, and sit on the veranda, watching the sun go down over the barrier reef, in a blaze of colors that no one would believe, if I could describe it, and listening to the jumping of the fish in the still water below. The head boy would be busy making curry and tea for me in the cookhouse; when he had done, he would lay my table, and go off to his own little hut at the back of the island, where his Motuan wife would be waiting for him, with the sago hot from the fire in a wooden bowl, and the white cocoanut cream in another, set out on the floor mat. And there was a fat little brown baby, that used to roll about at the foot of the veranda ladder, and shriek, when it saw its father coming down the avenue of palms. I've heard it, many an evening, when I had finished early, and gone out for a walk round the island. It used to put me into the blues, that, and the look of Bogi sitting cooking on the floor, with the light of the hurricane lamp behind her. Some of the other boys had wives with them too — I never prevented their bringing their girls along, it helped to keep them contented — and, what with one thing and another, my smart little house used to look solitary and empty to me, of evenings. It was the first real home I had had since I was a child, that island plantation; but it did not seem homelike.

Well, the end of it was that one day I provisioned my cutter for a long trip, told my head boy I shouldn't be back for some weeks, gave him a fathom of in-

structions, and the keys of the store, and set sail out of the lagoon for Port Moresby. What with calms and head winds, it took me near three weeks to get there, being the northwest season, but I did arrive at last, and tied up the *Bird of Paradise* to the new jetty, intending to live in her cabin till I had bought my stores, and had a look round the township, and found a pretty little girl from Hanuabada or Elivara to take back to Clare Island — so I had called my small property, after my native country at home.

I did the straight thing from the beginning. I didn't want a wild little savage, but a girl who could speak a bit of English, and was handy about a white man's house, and that meant a mission girl, and that meant marrying her. It did not seem to me that a man could honestly ask any white woman to share such a life as mine had to be, on that Robinson Crusoe island, surrounded at a distance of only a few miles by untamed cannibal tribes, and without any of the comforts of civilization — and in any case, there were practically no white women in the country. A native wife, it seemed to me, was good enough for such a ne'er do weel as myself, and I thought I'd be good enough for her. So I went up to the mission house that very same afternoon, and told Chalmers, who was a very important person in New Guinea in those days (and still is), exactly what I wanted.

Chalmers is a good man, and a plucky, but he has a bit of the "turbulent priest" about him, and he lectured me more than I liked, considering the errand on which I had come. He said I was a godless trader;

I told him that was true, but I didn't see what it had to do with the case; there were neither gods nor trading in this deal, only matrimony, and that was his job, if anything was. He said then that he didn't approve of these mixed marriages. I said I didn't ask for his approval; he wasn't my father, or my uncle, and I was of age, and able to answer for myself. If he did not see his way to doing any matrimonial agency business, why, I would just nip up the first girl I fancied, whether she belonged to anyone else or not, put her on board my cutter, and make sail for Clare Island without any parsons in the business at all. And I had no doubt, I added, that if there was anything to score up in heaven against such a proceeding, it would go down to Mr. Chalmers' account, not mine.

Well, considering that I was fairly rude to him, he took it rather well. He said that of two evils one must choose the less, and that in any case, I was acting honestly. One of his teachers would take me over the mission school, and if I saw any girl that I liked, of suitable age, he would marry us — under protest, he took care to add. Such marriages never turned out well, in his experience.

I did not trouble to hear any of his experience, but went off up to the hotel (as they called it; it was, and is, only a tin shanty where they keep a half-rotten billiard table, and sell vile liquor), spent as cheerful an evening as I could, with two or three schooner captains, and the dozen or so residents of the town — and put all thoughts of my matrimonial in-

tentions out of my head, as is my way when I have a job in front of me that wants taking seriously. Never cross a bridge till you come to it, is my motto. . . . And after all, it was fate, or chance, or whatever one may choose to call the blind "divinity that shapes our ends," that arranged the whole matter.

I had turned out of my hot little bunk rather early, while the sun was still low among the shiny leaves of the mangroves round the shore, and had dived overboard into twenty feet of sapphire-blue water, as warm as your hand, for my morning dip. I had put myself into a clean white shirt and trousers, and stuck a Canario knife, with an ivory and silver inlaid handle, into the red Spanish sash I'd unearthed from my old stores, to enhance the beauty that Nature hadn't given me. I knew I was an ugly brute, but I fancied myself a bit all the same, knowing that I was the kind of brute that generally gets a good deal more than it deserves.

. . . Curious, how I write all this in the past tense, as if I were old, or dead — I, just over thirty, and as full of life as one of those darting seabirds, glancing about the inner reef. Can Eliso or any woman on earth have hit me as hard as that, no matter what she has done? I don't want to believe it . . . yet there's some spring broken in these last few months — something that leaves just a little hollow, sick feeling where a swelling buoyancy of self-conceit used to float me up. I do not think, if I live to be a hundred, I shall ever swagger again, mentally

or physically, as I swaggered in my fine clothes down Hanuabada village that morning, proud as a peacock of my youth and strength, and feeling that I was coming among these savages like a fairy prince from another world, his hands full of gifts and honors. . . .

Among all the sea villages of New Guinea, there is none prettier than Hanuabada. It stands up in the clear, green water on long, stilt-like piles, ten or fifteen feet high, the seaweed end of each house well out among the waves, the landward end just touching the white coral gravel of the village street. Every house has its quaint, native-style veranda, decorated with white shells, and streamers of brown fiber, and all the deep thatch roofs are finished off with long, lobster-like horns, making the place look, at a little distance, like a school of weird sea-monsters just climbing out of the water to invade the land. It was early as I came down the street, and the colonnade of palms that fronts the houses was shot through with green and gold lights from the climbing sun. Tall, naked, brown men, with immense mops of hair, and gay haloes of parrot plumes, were strolling or squatting about the verandas, some getting ready nets and spears for fishing, others finishing up the bowls of gluey sago, and the fat roasted yams, that their wives had been cooking for them. Blue smoke from the breakfast fires filled the village; the dogs were running eagerly about, the children tumbling in heaps, like windfalls of shiny brown fruit, at the foot of the veranda ladders. I can see the picture as if it were yesterday — and the

native girls flitting in and out through it all, their full ballet skirts of colored grasses swinging like the costume of a première danseuse, their necks loaded down with clattering beads and strings of white dogs' teeth, handfuls of blood-red hibiscus glowing in their huge soft mats of hair. They are pretty, these Hanuabada women, and well they know how to use those soft black eyes of theirs, on white or colored male humanity!

But with the men about, the looks that they cast at the "taubada" were necessarily few and veiled. One girl only of the whole crowd came forward openly, as I walked down the village, and, to my surprise, spoke my name. I halted, and took a look at her. She was about fourteen — which means a fully developed woman, among these tribes — and was the prettiest little thing I had seen for a long time. Small, dainty, with tiny, pretty hands and feet, and graceful limbs, her color clear bronze brown, her eyes as big and soft as a seal's, she took my fancy mightily. I was almost certain, somehow, that I had seen her before, but I could not place her. I stood looking at her for a minute, admiring the picture she made with the early sun dancing on her beads and shell necklaces, and outlining in gold the becoming lines of the blue tattoo upon her slender, unclad body. Her hands were joined together at arms' length over the gay red and yellow stripes of her topmost ballet-skirt; she looked shyly up at me from under the overhanging mass of her black hair.

"Me here!" was what she said. And immediately

put one of her necklaces into her mouth, and bit it coyly.

"Why, Kari!" I exclaimed, "so it's you, grown up!"

I was better pleased than if I'd found a hundred pounds. Kari was a little lass I had discovered wandering by herself in the bush, deserted by her tribe, several years before, when I had been out prospecting for sapphires about the Astrolabe country. I had brought her down to Port Moresby, and handed her over to the mission. They put her in a teacher's family, and started in to instruct her about Noah and the ark, and Jonah's whale, and all the rest of it. I suppose it didn't do her any harm; you must fill a native's mind up with something or other, if you want to keep him or her out of mischief — and some of the other things they taught her — not to eat dogs or cats or human beings; not to buy charms from sorcerers to kill her enemies; what to do with a piece of soap; how to make bread, and sew clothes — were really useful.

I had not heard much about her after she went to the mission; I believe I was not considered fit society for a promising young convert, and when I sent to ask how she was getting on, as I did once or twice, the answers were rather curt. I had given the mission a bolt of calico for my little protégée every time I came to Port Moresby (which was seldom) and that seemed to me as much as the circumstances demanded. It is a fact that I had never thought of Kari as a wife, when I made up my mind to get

married — she was in my memory as a child only, and I did not realize how quickly a native girl grows up.

But the thought was there now. I remembered well what a brave, bright little companion the child had been, during those weeks of rough journeying through the Astrolabe — how she had picked up bits of the quaintest pigeon English, and talked to me after an odd fashion of her own — Kari was not in the least like any other child I had ever come across — how she had tried to help me with the work of my camp, fetching water, hanging my mosquito net, tending fires; whatever her tiny hands could find to do, in fact — and how really fond the small creature had been of myself. And here she was, a full-grown woman according to native ideas, a pretty one too, and just the same bright little bird of a Kari as ever. I wondered whether I could do better, if I overhauled the whole of the mission school.

But first I wanted to find out what she was doing alone in the village, in native dress, or rather undress, and without any of the mission teachers. Could she be married already? I felt astonishingly vexed at the idea — more or less. I had always felt a sort of proprietary interest in my small foundling.

She was still standing in the sun, looking shyly up under her fuzz-bush of hair, and biting her necklace.

"You here!" she added to her original remark by-and-by.

"Yes, Kari, I'm here, undoubtedly. What you make alonga village, eh?"

Kari's face clouded over, and the necklace dropped. The brown bosom began to heave under its elaborate embroidery of tattoo. The full Papuan under-lip rolled outwards.

"Too-morrow," she got out with difficulty, "I marry this my 'usband, Pona." She pointed to a big ugly fellow in a pink shirt and his own dark legs, who was chewing betel, and spitting gory mouthfuls on the ground, at a little distance.

"Who's Pona?" I demanded.

"He good man. He studen' 'long school, pleach Sunday. Too-morrow, marry me 'long miss'n."

"You like marry him, Kari?"

Kari's eyes overflowed, and she gave a little sniff for answer. I began to blaze. What right had anyone to marry the little creature against her will?

"No like," she sniffed out at last.

"Why?"

More sniffs answered. "He fool my hair. He give me stick. He tell me I go 'long hell, suppose I no marry him. He good man, flenty he savvy flenty fray, all same I no like."

"Why don't you tell the missionaries, Kari?" I fumed. "I don't suppose they know what Pona is. A first class hypocrite, no doubt! What are you afraid of? Afraid of going to hell?"

"I no fright along hell," confessed the little bride. "I think more better I go to hell, Pona he no stop. Pona good man, Kari bad girl. You going hell sometime, Lineti. Flenty white man he go hell, flenty

white man bad, all same me, all same you. All bad feofle, we stop long other. I like."

This candid confession of faith would have made me laugh another time, but I was too angry to be amused. I blurted straight out what was in my mind, without thought of care or consequence.

"Kari, you shan't marry him," I said. "You shall marry me, and come with me to my island. I want a little wife like you. You come right up to the mission, and I'll settle it to-day."

I had forgotten to talk pigeon English, but Kari understood. Up went the necklace into her mouth again, the shy bright eyes looked at me kindly, but with a touch of doubt.

"You good along me?" asked the small brown woman.

"Yes, Kari, I good along you."

"You no fool my hair, no giving stick, making me cly?"

"I'll not 'fool' your hair or beat you, Kari."

"You talk good along me, you give ani-ani (food) all same white man — tea, soo-gar, flenty?"

"Yes, plenty."

"You got some other wife belong you?"

"No got, Kari, no want. Kari she stop all herself."

Then, very shyly, and looking up and down — "You like Kari, flenty?"

"Plenty!" I said, and kissed her. Then I swung round on my heel, and dodged the ebony wood spear

that Pona threw at my back. I had seen it in his hand, and knew very well it would come.

"You black brute," I said, walking up to him — "You're not going to get this little girl, if I know it, to-morrow or any other day. You're coming to your precious mission now to be shown up and disgraced — dismissed, I should hope — and Kari's going to marry me."

. . . . . .

There was some little trouble about getting what I wanted, but it ended all right. Pona was dismissed, and sent back in disgrace to his village. Chalmers married Kari and me, after making considerable protest. He told me, indeed, that he would not have consented to perform the ceremony, had he not been convinced that Kari would come to no good in Port Moresby, she having already attracted more attention from the whites than was desirable. I thought him the most prejudiced person I had ever met, and I fear, had not much scruple about showing him my feelings. Perhaps I have changed my mind a bit since then.

The missionary would not take the five sovereigns I flung down on his table, at the end of the short ceremony. He gathered them up and handed them back to me, with what I called, in my own mind, a vinegar face.

"You'll probably be sorry for this some day," he said. And that was all our nuptial blessing.

Kari, in a magenta cotton frock that was hideously unbecoming, and a wreath of some red flower that

didn't go with the dress, enjoyed the whole thing indescribably. Motuan girls are not very keen on marrying a white as a rule; they would rather have their own village life, than

"The burden of an honor unto which they were not born,"

and they really admire their dark suitors most. But — there are exceptions. I was popular with the natives all round — if I said unusually popular I should not be beside the mark — and Kari, as a foundling for whom no price in arm-shells, pigs, or dog's teeth could be demanded, would have had rather a poor place among the native matrons of the village, who rank very much by the price that their parents or relatives have been able to extract from the bridegroom.

It was a lift, therefore, for Kari in every sense, and she collected and enjoyed the envious glances of the other mission girls, who stood round the door of the box-like little church, peeping in. They followed us down to the jetty below the mission house, to see us embark. My cutter had been brought over from the town, and the boy who had sailed her from Clare Island with me (a time-expired plantation hand, now going home) stood on the quay, all smiles and flowers and cocoanut oil, as we came down the winding path. The *Bird of Paradise* was decked out with streamers of colored trade calicoes, the wind was getting up, and fluttered all her gay pennons cheerfully, against the amazing blues and greens of the bay. Kari

dumped the little Chinese cedarwood box that contained her trousseau (grass skirts, cocoanut oil, armshells, fan-shaped combs, tortoise shell earrings, pearl shell necklaces) over the bulwarks, and sprang in. I jumped after her, shoved off, and gave the tiller into the little brown hand of my bride. In another minute I had the sails hoisted, the nor'wester caught them almost full, and the *Bird of Paradise* was away on her long flight to Clare Island.

CHAPTER II

I HAVE begun this task of writing down my unlucky story, and I am not going to "give it best," since that is a thing I've yet to learn how to do. But there is no denying that some of it hurts.

If I could burn out the memory of that year on Clare Island with a red-hot iron, I would do it gladly, and never wince. Most of us, I suspect, could say the same about some sore place in our lives,— and that sore place is much more often a folly than a sin. Repentance! Remorse! I have repented the good deeds of my life, such as they were, rather oftener than I have repented the bad ones. But with me, as I suppose with other people, it's the sillinesses that plant the real sting. There is no use repenting those, no use thinking, if you're religious, that they'll be forgiven, and if you are not, like me, that you will get paid out for them by Providence somewhere or somehow, and that anyhow you don't care. There is nothing wrong in a piece of utter condemned foolishness, and that's just why you can never shake loose from it, but have to carry it and its consequences round the rest of your life. If I were a good Christian, I suppose I should believe that God forgives sins. But I shouldn't believe — nor does anyone — that He forgives want of common sense. Nothing, and nobody, yourself last of all, forgives that.

When a white man marries a native woman, he commits the unforgivable sin — folly. With the best of motives, and in quite an agreeable and enjoyable way, I wrecked my life that day that I threw down the five sovereigns on the missionary's table, and had them handed back to me. And it was none the less a wreck, because, during a long time, I thought I had acted with the most consummate wisdom.

For there is no denying that I was happy. I was getting on towards thirty years of age, I had knocked about half the world, seen good times and bad times, and had as much pleasure as most. One thing I had not had — a home. And I liked it surprisingly well. It seemed to me, in those first few months, that I should never want to leave Clare Island again, never care for any other place in the world but my own little sunny, palmy kingdom with its white coral shores, and the brown thatched house where Kari and I had made our nest.

She was a fascinating little creature — I said in those days, and I say even yet, that I never knew a colored girl to match her. If there is any truth in the theory of the transmigration of souls, Kari had certainly been a charming Parisienne in a former state of existence — a pretty, perhaps a naughty, little woman who had been condemned to expiate a too great devotion to her "toilette" in one life, by passing another in the person of a small brown lady who had practically no "toilette" at all! No one who knows the extraordinary variety of the New Guinea races, and the astonishing likenesses to white types that one finds

among them (I myself know a black Kiwai overseer who is a Jew Money-lender to a hair, a brown old Trobriand heathen who is simply a Presbyterian parson badly sunburned, and dressed for bathing, and a feathered cannibal from Mekeo who might easily pass for a bronze statue of the famous General ———, plumed headpiece and all) — no one I say, who knows the different types of this amazing country, would have been astonished at Kari's Frenchness, odd though it was.

She was the daintiest little person conceivable in her attire, such as it was, and very choice indeed of her striped grass kilts, and her bead necklaces, and the plaited armlets for her arms.

She had a way of wearing those innumerable ballet skirts of hers, and swinging them from the hips as she walked, that was of the very essence of the boulevards. The make-up of her brown little face (which she carried out quite openly, sitting on the veranda floor with a trade looking-glass set up in front of her) was just as cunningly designed, in its lines of blue paint following the soft bronze curves of nose and brow, and the naïve little dabs of vermilion on cheek and chin, as the touches of kohl and rouge that underline the good points of pretty Lianes and Celestines, at the other side of the world. Her huge New Guinea mop of hair, decked out as it generally was with flowers and feathers, and carefully dressed and oiled, was a very fair copy of a fashionable white woman's tortured head. And there never was Parisienne, or white woman of any nation, since time began, so full of

the natural original coquetteries of womankind, as Kari.

She had been a bit of a belle at the mission, and more than Pona had wanted her and wooed her. This made her, as it always makes a girl, mischievous and capricious, fond to-day, elusive to-morrow, teasing, yet charming. There were days when she would make me beg for everything I got — my breakfast, a kiss, a clean shirt, a little native song to pass the time after dusk, a drink of water from the clay cooler in the corner, a cocoanut, a game of cards — giving each and all with a mischievous smile and a lip of utter silence. There were days when she chattered like a leather-head from dawn to dusk, ran after me like a little dog, and served me like a slave. I have known her to keep up the most dignified manners, copied and evidently improved upon, from the white women of the mission, for a whole day, singing "Shall we gather at the River," and other serious ditties, as she went about her work — and at sunset I would find her in the yard at the back of the house, springing and swaying, advancing and retreating, and flinging her limbs wildly about, while she sang in a high metallic scream the native welcome of the women to the warriors coming home with food for a cannibal feast. A performance, it may be added, that I did not encourage, since Satan himself alone knew what effect it might have on some of my half-broken "boys" from the man-eating districts of the mainland.

However, there were weeks at a time when Kari would be just the little Kari that I knew and liked best,

and it was wonderful to see how she brightened up the place. When the mopokes began to moan in the bush of evenings, and the great lagoon grew first blood-red, then rusty silver, and then black, and the cooking fires began to shine out from the native lines where the boys were boiling their rice, it wasn't the lonely beach in the twilight for Hugh any more, and the solitary restless tramp past the happy little cottages of the married quarters. No, Hugh had a pretty girl waiting for him on his own veranda, a little laughing, piquant person who talked the quaintest pigeon English, and liked to sit proudly and uncomfortably on a chair at the head of his table, pouring out tea "all same white woman." When I came in from the plantation in the middle of the day, there used to be a rush of small bare feet across the yard, and a high drawling voice singing out Kari's watchword—"Me here!" When I wanted someone to sail the cutter with me, or to take a hand with a bit of gardening, or to go out in a canoe and dive for shell-fish on the reef, Kari was always ready. "Me here," she would say, and skip lightly into the boat, or pick up the spade. A native woman expects to work, and they are all the better for not being spoiled. I did not spoil Kari.

In truth, I was happy enough. And I loved my wife? Well, yes, as one loves a native woman. But without reserve, or change, or thoughts of past or future, I did love, with all that was in me, my plantation.

It may have been those years of seafaring that gave me the longing for a little bit of land of my own, and

the pleasure in all the commonplace plantation round, weeding and gathering, lining, hoeing, and planting, cutting and drying the nuts, bagging the finished copra. Even three years of the bitter, salty life of the foremast hand is enough to plant deep in a man's heart the love of the kind, green earth and its generous, uncounted gifts. Made for a civilized life I never was, in spite of my birth and education — there's no city berth I could have had that I would not have broken out of at any cost, in a month — but idleness was never one of my faults, though I know well that's the first stone cast at one of us by the smug Pharisee of the top-hat and frock-coat. We whom the Red Gods call — as that new writer, Kipling, puts it — are not the idlers. Following that call, we come to grief in a hundred ways, we live with danger and hardship for our daily mates, we work our hearts out for the barest of livings, we die in our boots as often as not, and no one knows or cares when or how we ended — but we don't idle, friend of the pasty cheek and bulbous waistcoat. It is not in our breed. And don't forget, when you stop to take breath after abusing those of us who have stepped outside the class and occupation lines, that we are making the world — just that — for you.

I used to work all day on Clare Island, and the days were never long enough. What with overseeing the boys, taking a hand myself with some tough bit of clearing, trying the properties of dyewoods and gum-woods, and drug plants, that we used to run across in the bush, keeping the cutter ship-shape and Bristol

fashion, as a sailor-man should do, and sailing her about the lagoon to hunt for sponges, or bêche-de-mer (both " side lines " in my little business), adding to and improving the cottage and the cookhouse, knocking up a bit of furniture now and then, and half a hundred other odd jobs, I never had more than time to eat my meals and sleep. You can't buy anything to speak of in New Guinea, and I did not want to spend any of my slowly-growing hoard, if it had been possible. So Kari and I made everything we wanted, or did without it. Shall I ever forget the day the big bed was finished? A fine fourposter with a double mattress stuffed with kapok silk-cotton off my own trees, the frame laced across with sinnet cord spun from cocoanut husk by Kari's clever fingers, the uprights for hanging the mosquito net shaped and carved by the carpenter — that's Hugh — and the whole gorgeous piece of furniture varnished with gums out of the bush, melted down in over-proof spirit distilled from our own yams!

I could never hope to describe the pleasure that I came to take in all my little tasks and contrivances, or the sweetness of everything that I won at the cost of my own toil, and no more, from the rich storehouse of the tropic forest. I'm not enough of a philosopher to talk about those things scientifically — though, indeed, in my years at sea, in that quiet " middle watch " when the sailor does most of his thinking, I had racked my brains a good deal over the ends and beginnings and reason of the things that man was not meant to understand. I should guess, perhaps, that

we all feel the good old earth has a right to keep her children, whether she does or not, and when one does manage to snatch something from her direct, without having to pay a middleman — even if it's only cocoa-nut cream for your tea, instead of tinned milk from a store, or wild pepper for your parrot stew — one feels, somehow or other, that one has managed to collect a bit of something that was always due to you.

The big trees that had been on the island when I came were bearing well, and I got a fair price for my copra when I sailed down to Samarai with it. The bit of money (gathered trading in New Caledonia) which I had brought with me, had been enough for the clearing and planting of near a hundred acres — it only cost the food of the boys, and trade stuff to pay them at the rate of a pound or two a year, and a stock of tools. Two years the nuts had been planted; the third was passing by. In three more, there would be four or five hundred a year to me out of my little estate, and in five or six after that, it would be worth half as much again. I could hardly believe that I had been so prudent, so sensible, so worldly wise.

It seemed as if, for the first time in his life, the ne'er do well was losing the right to his title.

And I did not get tired of my home. It was six months now since I had carried off Kari in the *Bird of Paradise,* and never a white face had I seen in all that time except my own tanned leather countenance, looking at me out of my shaving glass. (Yes, I used to shave, and got Kari to cut my hair, and she washed seven clean shirts a week for me, and I wore a tie, and

shoes and socks, too. I hadn't knocked about the South Seas for nothing, and I knew what's the end of dressing in pyjamas, and going uncombed and barefoot. Yes, you might think a white man cannot lose his race, but some of us know he can — or what amounts to it.)

I had not, as I say, seen a white man for half a year, and the truth is I was not missing any. There is something immensely flattering in the deference paid to a solitary white by a crowd of dark skins, all the world over. My boys were a decent crowd, although they were of a cannibal tribe — there's no better plantation hand than one of the real, skull-hunting, roast-'em-alive-O cannibal fellows, once you've tamed and handled him a bit, and they seemed to think a lot of bad, untrustworthy, uncivilized Hugh Lynch. My overseer — a Fly River chap, with a good headpiece on him — used to gather my words like gold, and copy everything I did, down to my shellback roll in walking, and the "bucko, mate" language I'd use to smarten up the boys. Kari treated me like God Almighty most of the time; it was true, she began to show the native savagery a bit, and was more a little wild cat than a woman, at intervals; but I liked her none the worse for it. Nobody questioned what I said. Nobody gave me advice. Nobody ever "wanted to know" anything about anything. And the island was as lovely as a Kew gardener's dream of what Heaven would be, if he'd the making of it. And, with the hard work, and the pure sea air, and the quiet mind I carried, I was so strong and light that I could

not rest in bed once the first shimmer of the dawn crept up out of the lagoon, but would reach the center of my room in one spring like a rock wallaby, and make just ten steps of it down on to the shore, lying flat and cool and ivory-gray in the early light. I have run for half an hour there in the dawning, singing as I ran, and sending the sand flying right and left under my bare feet — scarce more conscious of my own existence than the swooping sea-hawks that circled out beyond the reef — just happy because it was another day, and because I was alive, and young, and very strong. . . .

At the end of six months, Sanderson's schooner came.

I had been expecting her for some time. My stores were running low, and the trader I dealt with in Samarai had promised to send up a fresh lot by the first opportunity. The *Orokolo* would be going up to Buna Bay about the time I should be wanting supplies, and I might rely on getting the goods by her.

She was late, as I say — a schooner always is — but my storehouse was not empty when the tall, white sail showed out in the fierce blue of the sky beyond the barrier reef, one hot, still morning in February. I had never seen the *Orokolo* or her owner, and I didn't know that I was very anxious to, though I wanted those cases of meat and bags of rice badly enough to make me welcome the sight of the pearly triangle in the sky, and to chafe at the light winds that brought the ship so slowly into the lagoon. It may have been what old wives call a " warning," or it may

have been a mere dislike to having my sovereign royalty of sole white man disturbed — I cannot say — but I swore at Sanderson in my heart, as I went down to my little coral jetty, and hoped fervently that he was badly wanted at Buna Bay, and would have to make sail again before sundown. I didn't want him.

The ship's boat was out by this time, and skimming across the water. She was at the jetty in a minute or two, and in another minute I was shaking hands with a tall, rather well-dressed man of about thirty, whom I thought at the moment, and still think, to have been the very best-looking piece of male humanity that ever I set eyes on.

Sanderson could have gone nowhere without as many eyes turning to look at him as if he had been a traveling prince. He was one of those chromo-coloring men, all eyes and hair, with a skin as white as a girl's, in spite of the New Guinea sun, and a mat of gold curls on his head like an actress's wig. I don't care for those large blue eyes in a man myself, but I must say there was nothing soft or effeminate about his — they were like hard, blue stones set tight in his head,— and I am sure nine men out of ten, and nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand, would have called him splendidly handsome. He was tall, as I have said, and very well set up — not that I couldn't have broken his neck for him, if I had wanted, but then, I am said to be the strongest man in the western Pacific. And I would not have exchanged an eighth part of my strength for the half,

or the whole, of his poisonous good looks — ugly red-haired brute though I am.

. . . . . .

Bert Sanderson, big, handsome, black-hearted Australian, lying in your lonely New Guinea grave under the sobbing casuarina trees, I have no hard feeling against you in my heart to-day. You are gone where all things are made even (so the good people tell us) and you have got your wages, whatever they may be. I make no guess at that, as I make none at what may be due to myself, by-and-by, if there is really anything that lies, at the last, beyond the Great Silence. But I took no chances, Bert Sanderson. I gave you your dues in this life, and the Devil, or the angels or the dark of utter annihilation, may have you now, for all that it matters to me.

Sometimes, sitting here through the long days of idleness that eat into one's very heart, watching the curl of the breakers far out on Basilisk reef — the breakers that beat in from the free, wide, wandering sea — I wonder what my life would have been if the *Orokolo* had never sailed into the lagoon of Clare Island. I should have missed the worst troubles of all my troubled history; Kari would be sitting on my palm-thatched veranda still, not so bright or so pretty, but quaint, and lovable yet; Siri, the Kiwai overseer, would be speeding up the boys to their work with shouts of mangled sailor-English, in the lazy hours of late afternoon, instead of lying as he lies to-day, dead and eaten by the burrowing land-crabs, underneath the sand of the island shore. Bert Sanderson would be

trading about the Louisiades as he used to do, there'd be no white man gnawing his soul out in Port Moresby jail . . . and She — Stephanie —

No, I can't write about her now. I shall have to, by-and-by. Time enough when it can't be helped. But this much I will say — I would not even wipe out the black, burning history of the last two years, that has set a brand upon me till I die, if it were to be at the cost of never having seen, never loved, never suffered by her.

. . . . . .

A host can hardly be rude to a guest because he thinks the latter too good-looking. I greeted Sanderson civilly, and asked him to come up to the house.

The little place was looking well that day, and I was proud to show it off. I never was much of a hand at describing, but I'd like to picture, if I could, how all those new, bright avenues of young palms, with the grass walks between them, and a bit of blue sea set like a stone in a ring at the end of every avenue, looked in the afternoon as we crossed the island to the house. I had spared a few of the big forest trees when clearing, and some of them — the kind that has the immense buttressed roots standing out like plank partitions — were half covered with pink and white and purple orchids, and masses of bird's-nest fern. And the coral trees on the shore, though they were as bare of leaves as a mountain tribesman of clothes, had bunches on bunches of flowers like scarlet fingers all over them. Some of the flowers had dropped into the lagoon, and were sailing about in the bright green

water. And there were huge, white, frilly shells, as big as a soup tureen, and crimson shells lined with mother-o'-pearl, and branches of coral like confectioners' work in sugar, lying about on the sand among more of the red flowers, and a lot of fallen hibiscus blossoms, just like gold bells with ruby clappers inside. There was a hot, aromatic sort of smell from the trees, and you could hear the chip-chipping noise of the boys at work clearing on the far end of the island, soft and monotonous enough to put you to sleep. We had some little way to go to the house, and you may be sure I added on to it so as to take the visitor round by my walk of six-foot yellow and scarlet crotons set in a hedge, as gorgeous as a double slice of sunset slid down out of the sky, and along my avenue of paw-paws, each twice the height of a man, and all loaded with green and yellow fruit bigger than vegetable marrows. I must confess the perfume of the flowers in a paw-paw avenue (you get the flower and the fruit at the same time, but on different trees) is powerful enough to make a sensitive person sick and giddy, but there aren't many sensitive people in British New Guinea. My granadillas had grown as large as melons, and filled the air with a rich, fruity scent, as we passed the trellised arbor over which I had trained the vine; and you might have thought a hundred people had been hanging out Christmas-tree decorations, if you had come unawares on the plot of lime trees covered with their own round, golden balls, and dangling all over with the purple eggs of the passion-fruit, that has run wild through half the bush

of the island. The approach ended up with a coral pathway — and if there is a better bordering to a neat walk of white coral gravel than a double row of large pineapples, all in full bearing, I do not know it.

As for the little brown house, with its sheltering veil of way-flowered stephanotis on the sunny side of the veranda, and the bright blue Lady's Mantle looking in at the windows, and the yellow trumpets of the alamanda, and white stars of jasmine, and scarlet trailers of D'Alberti creeper, hiding almost every bit of the thatch, I promise you it was worth looking at — all the more so, as the pretty brown bird that lived in this pretty nest, had come out on the veranda to greet us as we turned up the pineapple walk, and was standing in the full light of the westering sun, her face newly painted with lines of annatto red and washing blue, her brown skin satiny with the scented cocoanut oil that she had rubbed in, a row of snowy frangipanni flowers set like stars in the black cloud of her hair. She had put on every necklace she owned — bead, dog's tooth, shell, shell-money, mother-o'-pearl — and she had added so many extra ballet skirts to her usual equipment that she looked more like an animated pen-wiper than anything else. But nothing could disfigure her unique wild prettiness, nor the grace of her beautiful, half-naked figure, every flowing curve underlined and brought out by the cunning tattoo, as a white woman underlines with skillful pencil the brightness of her eyes, that he who runs may read them.

Sanderson and I had been talking business, briefly

and curtly, all the way up from the boat — so much weight of stores to be delivered, so much freight to pay, so much copra to be taken down to Samarai — but when we came in sight of the house he broke off, began twirling his curly yellow mustache in a patronizing way, and remarked:

"You've got a nice little humpy here all right!"

"I've taken some trouble with it," I said.

"And a nice little girl to keep you company," he went on, adding a coarse joke.

"She's my wife," I said instantly.

"I didn't suppose she was your grandmother," laughed Sanderson, suggestively.

"I don't think you understand," I said, rather slowly and distinctly, stopping under the arch of climbing pink convolvulus that ended the coral path. "I married Kari at the L. M. S. mission in Port Moresby, six months ago."

"Oh, you *did!*" was Sanderson's only comment, barbed with a sneer of contempt. And he turned and looked me over, as much as to say, "What sort of a fool is this?"

Straightway I began to excuse myself — for having acted decently, if foolishly.

"I didn't want a raw little savage brought up on human flesh," I said. "I wanted a tidy girl who could be of use about the house. Of course that had to be a mission girl."

"Of course," said Sanderson. I never knew a man in my life who had such a knack of making a harmless remark sound like an insult.

Neither of us spoke again till we reached the house. I presented Kari to Sanderson with as much formality as if she had been a white woman, and the little Papuan who had stolen the soul of a Parisienne, rose to the situation instantly, holding out her small brown hand with quite a society air, and smiling a smile that was pure Faubourg St. Antoine. "Q," she understood (that was Kari's best attempt at my Christian name) did not care for the stranger. Well, she would treat him with reserve, but one must do the house credit — perhaps all the more so, if the newcomer were of the carping kind.

So the small brown Martha went off to busy herself with household cares, and Sanderson and I sat on the veranda to smoke, and drink a whisky or two, and talk copra, while tea was getting ready.

I don't think I shall ever forget a moment of that evening, if I live till I am a hundred. The rain-like patter of the restless palms, growing dark against the scarlet sky — the immemorial sighing of the reef far out at sea — the stealthy scuffle of some creeping thing, land-crab, snake, or iguana, edging up to the house under cover of the growing dusk — filled in long spaces of silence, during which we looked at one another, and our eyes said many things that had nothing at all to do with the commonplace talk lagging so heavily on our lips. The eye talk of men to women has been written about many hundred thousand times; every futile scribbler thinks himself an authority on that pretty subject. But of the silent speech that passes between two men when the devils

of rivalry and envy are prompting in each ear, and the poisonous fungus of sudden hate is cracking the ground beneath their feet — of that, the hack harnessed to the ink-pot knows nothing. How should he? He has ink for blood, and the black-sepia-squirting cuttle-fish of the seas is not colder than he.

I had seen the look that Sanderson cast at my wife — the greedy smile parting his lips as she moved about the veranda. I knew just now his ear was set to catch each sound from within the house, while we sat and talked outside. I read the fits of musing into which he sank — the quick, appraising glance that flashed over my muscles, and dropped to his own big knotted hands, the knitting of the brow, the fatuous twirling of the yellow mustache. I could have killed him as he sat there, for the dreams that I saw in his eyes, as the light waned low, and the birds grew silent in their nests, and always that unseen creeping thing crept closer to the house, under cover of the fallen palm-leaves that were shivering harshly now, beneath the cold night wind that blew from the homeless sea.

. . . It takes but a small thing to jar a man's nerves, when they are strained almost to breaking. The noise of that creeping creature became suddenly unbearable. I broke away from the veranda, and jumped down onto the shore, without waiting to go round by the steps. It was a big fall, but I lighted easily, and picked up a stone — a good deal bigger than the occasion demanded. Perhaps you might call it a bowlder, more accurately. I had won many a

bet in South America by handling smaller pebbles than that.

"What the infernal regions are you doing?" asked Sanderson's voice pettishly. He leaned over the rail, and saw me.

"My word!"—the exclamation, though choked back under his breath, floated down to me in the dusk.

"Going to kill a snake," I said, with what I think must have been a nasty look. I kicked the dried palm-leaves, and out it came—not a crab, or an iguana, but a snake indeed, and one of a bad kind, so far as the light allowed me to see. It didn't try to defend itself, but began a rapid retreat towards the bush. . . .

Well, if any man—perhaps I might say any two men—who visits Clare Island cares to heave up a round coral bowlder on the shore by the big chestnut tree, he will find the smashed skeleton of a "tiger" about five feet long. It was some yards away from me when I threw, but that didn't save it.

"Did you kill him?" asked Sanderson rather superfluously, as I came up on the veranda again. His eyes met mine in the light of the hurricane lamp from the room.

"I always do," I said.

"Always do what?"

"Kill snakes. Will you come in to tea?"

Kari had done her best for us, and it was a very good meal that we sat down to, under the light of the swinging hurricane lamp, with the little brown lady, proud yet serious, seated at the top of the table

in the midst of a Catherine-wheel of ballet skirts. Sanderson ate heartily, and praised Kari's cooking to her in Motuan, her own language, watching to see if I understood. I suppose it was rather boyish of me to address my guest pointedly in Motuan, by way of showing that I did, but the truth is that Sanderson made me more inclined to boast of everything I had, was, and knew, than anyone I had ever met. I really do not know what the reason of this was, I only give the fact. There are certain coarse natures who do have this effect on almost everyone they meet, I've noticed, and assuredly a good deal of the dislike one feels for them is due to the way they have of dragging you down from your own ideals of decent conduct. I had spent the first half hour of Sanderson's visit showing off my possessions, the next displaying my strength, and now I was trying to make a display of my knack of picking up languages. It fairly sickened me, and I fell silent, picking the bits of cocoanut out of my fruit salad to chew them absent-mindedly, while I stared at the captain of the schooner.

The talk — sustained entirely by the visitor — dropped into English again, and Sanderson began reciting all the latest news. The Greek's lugger had been lost in the Trobriands. There was a new parson at the Port Moresby mission — and then some remarks on missions which it would do no good to anyone to repeat. Two Australian prospectors had been eaten in the Louisiades, and the natives were going about wearing their jawbones slung as lockets.

The new governor was expected any time now, in Port Moresby.

"He's a retired naval captain, isn't he?" I asked.

Sanderson sailed on without answering, as his way was.

"Got a daughter, I believe, and he's bringing her up with him — the condemned idiot! They've built him a decent house all right, but I shouldn't think a la-di-da fine London lady would find much to her taste in Port Moresby. I hear she's full of airs and graces. If there's anything on earth I can't stand, it's those — conceited people out from 'Home,' thinking they can teach us everything."

He knew, of course, that I was English — or rather, Irish — myself, but it did not suit him to remember the fact.

"I'll see his Excellency before very long," I put in, trying to keep my temper. "I want to take up a few acres opposite here on the mainland — it's sago swamp, and will feed the boys — and of course I'll have to run down to port about it."

"What did that woman of yours put in the curry? It's better than my boy makes it," was the guest's polite reply.

His mat of gold curls was shining wonderfully under the lamp, and I could think of nothing, for a moment, but the delight it would be to twist one's fingers into that close mop, and knock the head that grew it hard on the veranda floor. But I controlled myself, and replied that my wife — emphasizing the

word — used fresh turmerice out of the bush, I believed.

The meal ended soon after; there was little more talk. Sanderson had grown suddenly silent, and seemed to be pondering over something. We smoked without talking on the veranda while Kari cleared away, and I wondered if I had dreamed all the odd things I had been fancying earlier in the evening, for neither then nor later, when my wife was busy about the living room putting up a rough cot for the visitor, and hanging a new mosquito net from the rafters by cords, did Sanderson take the least notice of her.

"I must be going a bit dotty," I said to myself. "Most people do, in these out-of-the-way places. That trip to port will do me all the good in the world; I'm glad I've planned it."

Next morning Sanderson and I were both hard at work overseeing the boys as they landed my goods from the schooner, and took the copra sacks down the jetty to the boat. We tallied the things as they came and went, and got through the job early. By dinner time — twelve o'clock — my little tin store was full, and the copra-house was empty. We went back to dinner on better terms with each other. I was satisfied with Sanderson's smart and accurate way of doing business and overseeing boys, and he seemed much more inclined to make himself civil, indeed, he was apparently laying himself out to that end.

And again I wondered, as we tramped along the croton walk, and through the paw-paw avenue, more

oppressively sweet than ever in the full blaze of the mid-day sun — had I been mad the night before?

Sanderson left in the afternoon, he was in a hurry to get to Buna Bay, he said, and the wind was nearly fair. I cannot say I regretted his departure, or that I felt any liking whatever for him — but somehow, I felt rather ashamed of myself to-day, not being sure that I had behaved quite decently to my guest. I saw him down to his boat, and shook his hand as he got in. . . . That was one of the things I remembered — afterwards.

When I got back to the house, Kari was standing on the veranda, watching the schooner clear through the break in the reef. As the white sails swept into the open sea, she turned away, and spat violently on the ground.

I felt self-righteous at having got over my fit of rudeness, and of course had to reprove her. She was a white man's wife, I told her, and white men's wives did not express dislike in such an uncivilized way.

Kari made a wicked little face, and picked up her fishing basket. "Flenty no good, that fellow cap'n," she observed, going down on to the shore. "Q he good man, all same God. I go catsing trab for tea belong Q."

Then, most unaccountably, she burst into tears.

CHAPTER III

THINGS were not quite the same on the island after the *Orokolo's* call.

Of course, it was not her fault that the rainy season, which ought to have been over, suddenly returned upon us with an untimely burst of fierce squalls, and turned the island into a sopping sponge of wet bush, for several dreary weeks. Neither had the schooner's call anything to do with the trouble that the boys began to give just then — that was due to the fact that one-half of them accused the other half of practicing sorcery against them, and endeavored to exorcise the unholy influence with spades and clearing-knives. I stopped the mischief before it had gone very far, but it worried me for the time, and may have made my temper uncertain. Everyone who has lived long in New Guinea knows that it has a peculiar effect, and not the best, upon tempers. I do not think Kari can have found me as indulgent as usual, during those weeks of wet and worry.

Then Kari took ill, and I forgot everything else. She was very near to dying for the best part of a week and took some time to pull round. It was then that I knew for the first time there had been hope of a child to share our island exile — a hope that was not to be fulfilled.

It made me fonder than usual of poor little Kari, and as gentle with her in her weakness as a rough man could contrive to be. I brought another woman in to do the work of the house, so that I could spend half the day hunting over the island for dainty birds and fish to tempt Kari's appetite, and the other half sitting beside the great bed we had carved and carpentered together, fanning the mosquitoes away, and telling stories to my wife. Hard driven for something to amuse her, I had tried a nursery tale one day, and after that we had to go through the whole round — Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Red Riding Hood, Puss in Boots, and as many more as I could think of. Kari loved them; she would lie for hours at a time listening, in the dim brown twilight of the inner room, her great mop of hair making a dark circle on the pillow, her little bronze hands and thin arms with their clanking pearl-shell bracelets, stretched outside the gay patchwork quilt. As the sun grew low, the westering rays used to creep under the eaves of the thatch, and slant across the bed in long spears of dusty gold, then the light would fade, swiftly as it fades in equatorial countries, and Kari would give a little shiver, and creep nearer to me. There could be no stories of giants and dragons after sundown; they made my wife tremble with fright, eagerly though she demanded them in the gay blaze of noon. I must tell her then about the missionary's daughter with the glass shoes, who had to be back at the mission house by eight, but nevertheless married the son of the captain of a man-of-war — or about the great

puri-puri man (sorcerer) who made himself look like a Pusi, and walked about in miner's boots — but the story about the great black dugong that came up out of the sea and married a chief's daughter, and afterwards took off his dugong hide and told her that he was a man after all — that she would hear when the morning came,— it would make her "flenty flighten" now.

Nursery tales, and yarns from the Arabian Nights, locally colored to make them comprehensible, passed away the days of my wife's convalescence pleasantly enough, and she was soon strong enough to get up and go about again. Everything was as it had been before, to all seeming, and yet —

I found myself glad that the child had not lived, and unpleasantly anxious for the future. The realization of what this marriage meant was beginning to come home, though I did not understand it at the time. The thought of a little half-caste boy or girl — a child with woolly hair and flat nose, that would nevertheless bear my own likeness — worse, might even look like my dear dead mother, or my father — was almost revolting to me.

Still, I remained fond of Kari, and she seemed attached to me. She was not so bright or so merry now-a-days, and she used to have inexplicable fits of sulks, or bursts of crying, like the fit of tears she had given way to on the day the *Orokolo* went. But her recent illness furnished a ready excuse, and I was not hard on the poor little girl, even when she tried my patience a good deal. After all, a woman

is — just a woman — and one need not expect too much.

And when Kari was quite strong again, I began to get ready for my trip to Port Moresby. I was really anxious to get a grant of that piece of sago country: it would be invaluable to my plantation, and save me no end of expense. The boys preferred a slimy mess of native sago to flour or biscuit any day, and I saw no reason why I should go on spending money uselessly on expensive store goods, when over there on the mainland there were many square miles of good sago swamp, which no one needed. Of course, if I wanted to avoid a raid on my island that would not leave a nut on a tree, or a soul alive, I should have to buy the country from the native tribes, after getting the grant; but that would only mean a few boxes of tobacco, and half a dozen bolts of calico, at most.

Certainly, the land hunger so well known to pioneers was beginning to get hold of me.

. . . . . .

Blue and green and gold and snow, the beach and the island shone in the sun like a handful of jewels, the day I went away. The full splendor of the equatorial noon beat on the brown thatch of my little home, turning it almost white, as I stood to wave a last good-by to Kari at the bend of the pineapple walk. A crowd of Mambaré boys, decked out with feathers and leaves, were beating loudly on their iguana skin drums, as they waited for their midday meal, in the shade of a clump of palms. Some-

thing in the whole scene,— perhaps, as superstitious folk might say, something in myself that made me "fey" that day — impelled me to sing as I went down between the perfumed paw-paw trees to the jetty, and of all songs, it was "The Old Kentucky Home" that came to my lips. I shouted it out at the top of my voice, swinging my arms as I walked —

"The sun shines bright on the old Kentucky home,
'Tis summer, the darkies are gay,
The corntop's ripe, and the meadow's in the bloom,
And the birds make music all the day."

What was the next verse? I could not remember, so I went on with the chorus, and then stopped for a moment to think; it worried me that I had forgotten. I was out of the paw-paws and the crotons now, and passing through a bit of ground that we had not yet cleared. The reed-grass, tall and thick and close on ten feet high, rose like a wall on either side of the track; the heat, here in this canyon of vegetation, away from the fresh breath of the sea, was overpowering. I stood where I was, and took out my handkerchief to mop my face, while I tried again to remember the song — worrying myself, as men who live in lonely places do, over a trifle that was scarce worth it.

Then, from some unseen retreat in the depths of the reed-grass stems, came a thin, harsh voice, singing —

"Dey hunt no more for de possum and de coon
By de meadow, de hill, an' de shore,
Dey sing no more by de grimmy of de moon
On de bent by de ole cabin door.

" De day go by like a s'adow on de heart,
All sorrow, where all was deright,
For de time has come when de darkies has to part,
Den, my ole Kanucka 'ome, good-night!"

I could not say, as people do in novels, that in spite of the heat the words sent a shiver through me, for they didn't, but they made me feel suddenly and unaccountably enraged.

" Siri!" I yelled. I knew it must be Siri, for none of the other hands had been long enough with white people to pick up their songs as the Kiwai had done. " Siri! Why the devil aren't you at work?"

" By-'n'-by, I eating dinner, Taubada!" came a reproachful reply, followed by a rustling in the grass.

" Well, go and eat it, and be hanged to you!" was my good-by to the faithful darky. When Siri and I met next, there was five feet of solid cold coral sand between us, and if he was singing songs at all, it must have been Moody and Sankey hymns, in a white nightshirt and a wreath of palm. (I'd seen him in both, walking about the plantation, often enough to be reasonably certain that he would be at home in the rig-out; and as for harps, if you gave Siri a Jew's harp, and plenty of leisure to lie in the sun and play it, he'd ask no more of time or eternity.)

Well, well! One may make fun, as the Irishman must do, when he knows it's a choice most of the time between laughing and crying. But I have often wished since then, that I had said good-by more kindly to my decent big black Kiwai overseer.

The lad who was to go with me was ready waiting on the deck of the cutter, and nothing remained but to loose the painter and hoist the sail. I looked back to see if Kari had followed, but there was not a sign of my little brown bird. She had been crying half the night and all the morning, and had hardly been able to stand when I left the house, so I scarcely expected to see her. Yet I'm not sure, if she had by any chance come down to the jetty, that I would not have picked her up and dropped her then and there over the gunwale of the *Bird of Paradise* — in spite of my resolution against taking her down to Port Moresby, which was not the best of places for a pretty native girl, respectably married. In Clare Island, the other women would take care of Kari as native women of the East End do take care of "grass widows," in their husbands' absence; in port, I should have had to leave her alone half the time, with brutes like Sanderson always on the prowl — but still —

Still, something that was not reason, not forethought, something that burrowed like a blind mole in unseen depths of the mind and never faced the light — kept tugging at my heart as the *Bird of Paradise* spread her white wings and flitted out to the open sea. Now that I was fairly away, I wished I had taken Kari with me.

I had time to forget about presentiments and fancies before I reached the end of my voyage. The southeast trades had set in by this time, but they knocked off for a holiday before I had got through China Straits, and the rest of my voyage was a mad-

dening succession of calms and head winds, with just an occasional slant from the faithless southeaster. I called at Samarai for provisions, and it was well I did, for the southeaster did not spring up until I was nearly a month out from Clare Island, and just making port. I had never known anything like it at that time of year, and it worried me a bit — I should have been ready to start home by that time.

Still, in the out-of-the-way countries one learns patience — one has to — and I put Clare Island out of my mind for the present. Siri could be depended on to keep the weeding up, and I was doing no planting just then. There were plenty of provisions in the store, Kari was well and hearty, and I hadn't any need to worry. I told myself that several times.

Sanderson was not in port after all; they said he had gone down to Cooktown to have his boat new coppered. I was glad, I hated the sight of him and his girlish curls. Men generally do dislike the curly-headed male; I don't know why.

My application, I found, could not be considered until the Governor arrived, so there was another delay. Captain Hammond might come in a day or two, might not be heard of for a month — there was no telling. The new Government steam yacht had gone down to Cairns to fetch him, but it was not known whether he was yet in Sydney.

His daughter, I heard, was certainly with him, incredible though it seemed. He was a widower with only that one child, and no doubt he wished to have her company. It seemed a selfish thing to bring a

fashionable London girl, delicately reared, to such a savage spot as British New Guinea — she would almost certainly be invalided with fever, we thought, and the wild surroundings of her home would terrify her half out of her life.

They are beginning to study the causes of malaria in these days I hear, and it is even prophesied that whoever lives into the twentieth century will see that scourge of the tropics fairly under control. One may believe as much or as little of that as one likes. It is certain, at all events, that New Guinea of to-day is an excellent place to "catch your death in," and all of us — the few whites of Port Moresby and the district beyond — were agreed that it was a scandalous thing of the Governor to bring a delicate young English girl into such a country. We were also agreed, however, that it was an ill wind that blew nobody good and that the sight of a petticoat in Port Moresby would be as refreshing as a trip to Cooktown, to us half-savage, white-womanless creatures.

Indeed, we were all awaiting the *Merrie England's* arrival with a keenness of interest surely never aroused by the advent of a mere official in New Guinea before.

I was putting up with Worboise, an elderly man who had been into as many odd corners, and seen as many strange things, as any white in New Guinea — and that was saying a good deal. He lived in a little tin shanty down on the beach, and had a Chinese cook-boy who fed us rather well. Worboise himself was badly touched with the weakness of the pioneer and

the lonely man — interminable "yarning" — he never cared whom he talked to, or rather at; myself, the nearest native, the Chinese cook-boy, it was all the same — when he got started on a coil of his endless autobiography, he'd unwind it to the last thread or perish.

I did not much mind it after supper in the evening, when one was sitting on the sand outside the verandaless door, smoking trade tobacco, and watching the palm-tree tops draw themselves out in Indian ink against the immense scarlet sweep of the sunset. But early in the morning — well, no man ought to be expected to listen to a yarn ten fathom long about head-hunting and pearl-shell thieves, before he's had his breakfast.

That was why I found myself one morning at half-past six, on the top of the craggy little hill that overhangs the township, looking out to sea. It was the only place one could be safe from Worboise's unending to-be-continued-in-our-next.

I wish I could describe how the great Pacific looked that day in the glassy calm of early morning, while the boisterous "trades" were still asleep — how far, far out the shining silver swept beneath the blue, to that utmost curving rim of the world where the outbound ships go down. I sat on the rocks that top the hill, for an hour or more, looking across the bay, and thinking "long, long thoughts." . . . It came to me then, somehow, that if I had a true home or country in the world, it was that far sea-line — that and nothing else. That's the spot of earth's

surface that we vagabonds know and love best of all — the promised land towards which we always turn. . . .

When I was a child, they used to tell me that if I could only follow up the rainbow to its foot, I should certainly find a crock of gold there — fairy gold. . . . If one of us wanderers with the salt drop in the blood, and the foot that never rests till it's pointed straight and stiff beneath the daisies, or the black leaf-mold of the jungle, or the desert sand, were to find himself some day on the very horizon verge that no man ever wins to, would he meet the master of us all, the Red God of roaming, face to face?

Tennyson knew a little about these things — I have often wondered how he did know, that smooth, not to say smug, singer of "May Queens" and "Walks to the Mail." There must have been a corner somewhere in his mind that was kin to Us — a very small corner, O bard of the Respectable and Nice! "The Voyage" and "Ulysses" were all you could spare for us, though you'd hundreds of pages for the tea-party guests on the vicarage lawn, and the walks by the "woíd" (that sounded quite wild and uncivilized to you, didn't it?) and the pearls, and the curls, and the faintly-smiling Adelines. Well, as for us,

> "Ill or well, or sick or sound,
> We follow that which flies before."

because we know that,

> 'All experience is an arch where through
> Gleams the untraveled world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever as we move."

And we are grateful for those few lines, since they, and what goes before and after them, are to us the song of life.

. . . I started out, I think, to say that by and by I saw the *Merrie England* from the top of the hill.

When I caught the tiny smear of smoke on the edge of the sea, I knew that it would not be visible to anyone in the township for another quarter of an hour; so I sat there rather gloatingly enjoying my "private view," as the little smear became a big one, and a black speck showed out underneath it, and two needle-points of masts, with a pin-point of funnel between them, became visible to my sea-trained eyes, a long way off yet. At this point, they saw the vessel down below, and instantly the wild yell of "Sail-O!" that always attends the incoming of a ship in an oceanic colony, burst out all down the coast, spreading along the mile-and-a-half from Port Moresby to the native village a good deal quicker than a forest fire. In half a minute, the village, the next village, the one after that, Port Moresby itself, and the isolated hills around the town (where a surprising number of natives are usually wandering about unseen), were answering back yell after yell as if a besieging army had suddenly overwhelmed the valley. The excitement died down, as usual, in a few minutes,

and then from my eyrie on the hill, I could see the whites beginning to buzz in and out of their houses like ants when you poke a stick into a nest. They ran out with flags, and decorated the half-dozen stores and offices of the "town," they hung lengths of red and white trade calico on their veranda rails, they sent boys up the palms to cut big twenty-foot leaves, and tie them round the doorway of the Government office. Every little vessel in the bay ransacked its flag locker, and made itself as gay as was possible at a few minutes' notice. It was astonishing to see how much was done in the three-quarters of an hour that passed before the leisurely little steamer slid alongside the jetty, and made fast; indeed, the little town looked quite festive.

By this time, the southeaster had waked up, as if roused out by the stirring "Sail-O!" and now all the palm-tree heads were tossing and streaming in the strong, cool river of wind, and the wonderful pea-green and peacock-blue paintings of mountains and valleys and groves that had covered all the wide glassy reaches of the great harbor half an hour before, were broken up into cheerful little dancing waves. The "trade" had found out the two Union Jacks on the *Merrie England* — one on the main-mast, and one at the stern — and was fluttering them gayly, as the ship rounded the harbor point. No mistake about it, our new Governor was on board. I made haste to get down now, and take my place on the jetty.

The last Governor had been an amiable nobody,

scarcely strong enough for the place, and he had left us unregretted. There were rumors, however, to the effect that we might find our sailor Governor something of a King Stork, after the King Log of whom we had been relieved, and we all strained our eyes eagerly towards the smart, slim white figure standing on the forward deck, surrounded by a little group of officials, and accompanied by — yes, she had come! It was a girl — a young girl — a girl in a blue dress — a girl "beautiful like an angel," as the susceptible little French recruiter, Léon Cruchet, declared, while the *Merrie England* was still so far off that you could not have told whether the object of his admiration was black or white.

It would be hard to say which of the two was the more stared at when the gangway was up, and the Government Secretary was tripping across it, a company smile on his face, and an address of welcome in his hand, and the populace of Port Moresby, amounting to about twenty, was making as much of a loyal crowd as it could, spread out over the jetty. I think, in spite of the strong interest we all felt in the plucky daughter, the father received most of our attention at first. Afterwards there was another story to tell!

Captain Hammond certainly looked the typical naval officer all over, seeming as much in place on the smart white deck of the yacht as a palm seems at home on a coral beach. It was rather difficult to fancy him administering a shore "command," but that was not because His Excellency didn't look as if he could administer anything or anybody, so far as dis-

cipline went. Rather small, very thin, very much dried up with salt and sun, a face like a hatchet cased in leather, a figure like a bit of watch-spring, steel-rivet eyes and a granite chin — this was our new ruler in outward appearance.

"A hard case, Hughie," commented old Worboise, who had been amazingly silent — for him.

"He'll make some of the blackbirding lot sit up, I dare say," I answered. "Look at the daughter, Worboise — isn't it criminal to bring a bit of china like that out here?"

She was standing by her father while he read the address of welcome and made a lengthy reply that nobody could hear. She was rather taller than the little Governor, but hardly showed it, being slight and very graceful in figure. As far as we could see from the jetty, she was fair-complexioned, with dark hair, and (I thought) blue eyes. She held herself exceedingly well, and her slight, well-bred hands and feet were charmingly gloved and shod. Her dress was full of fashionable complications, but it was all so lacy and frilly and dainty, and so smartly worn (there's a wonderful difference in the way women wear their clothes) that she did not look or move at all awkwardly in it. Her curly fringe, and those deep blue eyes of hers (I had decided now that they were unmistakably blue) were shaded by the shell-curved brim of a little blue bonnet tied on with strings, and she carried a parasol that looked as if it were made of froth and spiders' webs.

I got nearer to the edge of the jetty, and looked at

her — looked at her. She made me think of Christmas annuals and colored pictures — of primroses coming out in green lanes under a soft, cool, milky sun — of wet streets with shop lights shining on the pavement at four o'clock, and pretty boots, and furs, and rosy faces beaten with the wind flashing by out of the shadows — of lilac smelling fresh in the rain on heavenly spring mornings,— of rose-shaded lamps shining on crystal and silver, and the even, pleasant murmur of the talk of well-bred people about a civilized dinner-table — of many things that were no longer in my life, and never would be again, since I had paid them all away . . .

For what?

They were coming ashore now, and I drew back — I, the rough, uncivilized planter and trader, who lived in a hut, and was married to a black wife, must not press too closely upon the path of His Excellency's daughter . . . a white lady, delicate and dainty as one of the pale sweet flowers of her own far North. No tropical hibiscus or flame-flower this, but a snowdrop, a spring anemone. . . . How white she was! Her neck, under the low ruffle of snowy lace that she wore, was just the color of the lace itself; her ear, half hidden in the mass of curls that all girls wear in these days, was like a little pearly shell just off the reef. And the curls — well, the probability that she had put them up in paper at night made them all the more admirable to us, who had seen nothing but frizzled wool for so long.

She followed her father closely through the little group of residents and the crowd of natives behind — turning her small, well-dressed head to right and left, and smiling in acknowledgment of the thin but hearty cheer that greeted the party. She did not look a day over nineteen, but she was as perfectly self-possessed as any dowager of fifty. No bread-and-butter miss from the country was this; a London belle, finished in the ways of the world, and used to admiration as to daily bread, was our Governor's daughter, or I was much mistaken.— And yet, how unspoiled and sweet!

The foolish, monstrous draperies that she carried so gracefully, rustled past me, leaving behind the very faintest suggestion of perfume — as if a fresh hill-wind had somewhere blown over a bank of wild white roses, and carried away a memory of the delicate scent in its heart. Then the reek of cocoanut oil from the native crowd rose up and blotted it out.

She was gone.

The crowd scattered as quickly as it had collected. The pier grew empty; the steamer backed away to her moorings in mid-harbor. I was left standing by myself in the sun and the tearing, homeless wind that beat in from the empty sea. "By myself"— yes — the cocoanut oil-smelling crowd was not yet all gone; black woolly heads and brown limbs moved close beside me. But all the same, the white man was — alone.

CHAPTER IV

IT was nearly another fortnight before I got away. On the day I sailed out of Port Moresby harbor, I had been nine weeks absent from Clare Island.

The grant of land had been made, I had had a brief interview with the new Governor, and had been more than confirmed in my first opinion of him — in the end. At first, I must confess I thought him something very near a fool. I am not fond of talkative men, and Captain Hammond (who received me in his Port Moresby office) overwhelmed me with a perfect deluge of what I rudely classified as cackle, about anything and nothing, while he searched through the papers on his shelves to find my letters of application. The weather, the temperature, the wind-shield screen at the back of the office, the distance from the village to the town, the speed of the *Merrie England,* the thefts of eggs from the Government henhouse by snakes and iguanas, all contributed to the stream of chatter, which issued forth as thickly encumbered with capital "I's" as a babbling river with stones. I threw in an answer or a remark here and there carelessly, though not without the respect due to His Excellency's position. He was just a tiresome official bore, I thought, and in all probability no more of an acquisition to the country than those who had gone before him.

In the midst of these reflections, being quite wearied with His Excellency's cackle about the eggs and the fowls and the depredations of the carpet-snakes — for which he seemed to think his Port Moresby officials in some mysterious way responsible — I looked up from the watch-chain I was carelessly fingering, and met the Governor's eyes.

I never thought him a fool again.

Whatever emotions a fool may excite, fear is not one of them, and there was that in those eyes of flinty gray, that made me understand why Captain Hammond's ship had formerly been known as the smartest man-of-war on the Australian station.

I realized, too, that during the somewhat lengthy interview, while I thought I had been listening to a poor and shallow mind revealing itself, that very mind, behind the cloak of a windy wordiness, had been watching me reveal myself with the freedom and carelessness of one who feels himself practically alone. . . .

What was the verdict? I had not the faintest idea, any more than I had an idea why I was so passionately anxious, all of a sudden, for this man's good opinion. But that it had been passed, I knew; and that nothing would alter it in a hundred years, I guessed.

It seemed that I was at all events approved enough to be trusted with the piece of land I had applied for. The grant was made — still in a flood of cackle — the papers handed over, and I found myself outside the office, feeling pleased, bewildered, and, somehow

or other, at the bottom of all, a little cold at heart. Something had disappointed me, but for the life of me, I could not tell what.

It was late in the afternoon, and the sun was setting, which is to say that the whole western sky and sea resembled, more than anything else, the explosion of some colossal volcano, and the outpoured floods of flame and lava at its feet. The man who can describe a New Guinea sunset of the southeast season has yet to be born. Opposite the amazing splendors of the west, a livid yellow-green light flooded the grassy valley that lay in the lap of the hills, bringing out in wonderful clearness every detail of track and swamp and tree, though all were at least a mile distant. And through the yellow glow, as I stood on the veranda of the Governor's office, I could see very far away, a dark figure flying swiftly towards the sunset. It was the Governor's daughter, out for her evening ride. I had not seen her since she landed. . . . It was a stormy sunset, I had known there would be rain; the skies wept heavily as I and the *Bird of Paradise* put out to sea.

. . . . . .

There should have been only head-winds at that time of year, but New Guinea is too near the equator for its seasons to be absolutely reliable, and we had actually a fair wind the greater part of the way. Eastward and southeastward down the coast we ran — that wonderful coast which is, to my mind, unequaled for sheer beauty by any other in the world. Sometimes we kept far out at sea, to avoid the dan-

gerous reefs of the shallow waters, and then we could see, in the early morning hours, before the mists had gathered, how the green foot-hills of the shore-line sprang back, wave on wave, to the immense blue ramparts of the high main range. There, as I and perhaps two other white men knew, you could climb and climb thirteen thousand feet, up to where the forget-me-nots and wild strawberries grow as they do in England, and the mountain rivers run all fringed with ice. Far back, these ranges were painted with the most wonderful hues of Prussian blue and purple, fading on the summits to a pure speedwell shade that seemed more than half transparent. And everywhere, near and far, rounding the limbs of the giant peaks of the Owen Stanley Range, curtaining the mountain precipices that overhung the still blue bays, flowing in and out of the deep dark valleys, and checkering all the country with vivid, velvety lights and shades, spread the unconquered "bush"—the mantle of primeval forest under which New Guinea hides her secrets.

I never experienced such a wind as we had, before or since; just as much as the cutter could safely stand, yet never too much, it carried us as steadily as an auxiliary engine down the Kapa-Kapa coast, past Cloudy Bay and Orangerie Bay, past Fife Bay and round South Cape, and into Samarai,—not fair all the way, of course, but fair enough to keep us steadily going. And when we were through China and East Cape Straits, and heading back northwestward up the coast, the southeaster that should have

been blowing all the time took on duty again, and swept us finely through the D'Entrecasteaux. We ran past Normanby, gunwale under, all afternoon, with the water jabbering along the keel, and the sails humming above our heads. Four thousand feet the big island towered above us, laced with ribbons of white waterfall all down its mighty flanks; the cocoa-palms stood thick as rushes on its white coral shores, and bent like rushes to the steady streaming of the gale. Good Enough, a fairy castle of hyacinth blues and ivories, nine thousand feet high, swung away to our starboard side, miles and miles distant, as we headed in for the northern mainland, towards Cape Endiadere. And still the wind kept up, and the sun shone all day, and the shouting seas raced behind us, flinging fire-spangled spume and snow. It was a breathless voyage, with little sleep or rest for either the boy or myself, every stitch of canvas set day and night, the cutter lying over all the time so that one could not get footing on her deck, the log heaved every hour or so to see how the knots were piling up . . . a killing trip, yet what sailor could have resisted taking full advantage of such splendid luck?

We made Clare Island early one forenoon, the wind beginning to drop a little, and the sky growing brassy with heat. I remember I was glad to see the long low streak of blue creeping up out of the sea again, and I swung my arms about (the boy being at the tiller) and sang "White Wings" for my own welcome home. I haven't the heart to write down the words

of the song; I have wished ever since I could forget them.

The cutter ran slowly up to the land, the wind falling more and more as we came in. We were under the lee of the island now, and every moment I expected to hear the cry of "Sail-O!" starting out of the bush. The plantation hands never missed signaling the approach of a boat, and Kari was seldom many seconds behind them.

But Clare Island, as we ran up to the jetty, and lowered the sails, was silent as the grave.

There was no one on the shore. Two melancholy, mop-headed pandanus trees, drooping gloomily on their long wooden stilts, were the only objects that broke the bare expanse of sand. The coral-rock jetty stood up stark and unoccupied in the smiting glare of the mid-day sun. The bolt of uncleared bush behind was black and still as some primeval forest of the unknown mainland ranges.

I got out of the boat and stood on the blazing jetty. It seemed to beat up in waves beneath my feet. I told Garia I was feeling ill, and sat down on a stone.

"Masser, what for no one he come?" asked Garia.

I jumped up to my feet, and answered; but it wasn't Garia I spoke to, and I should not care to write down what I said. I think I was mad for the moment, because then — I don't know how — the truth hit me, and hit me hard. I knew.

When I began to run down the bush track, Garia did not follow. He squatted down on the shore beyond the jetty, and began to cry. I believe the poor

ignorant savage had read my mind like a book — and what he read had terrified his childish soul. I heard his voice as I ran down the track, between the reed-grass walls — "Masser, no more, no more!"

In the pigeon English of Papua, "no more" means simply "stop," but I had forgotten that, and the cry followed me like the voice of some creature of ill omen, prophesying disaster.

I broke from the forest like a hunted brute, and headed for the paw-paw walk. There, in full speed, running as I had never run in my life, I suddenly stopped short — so short that I had to catch at the nearest thing to keep myself from falling.

It was a black and broken paw-paw stem.

There was no paw-paw walk; only a double row of burned stumps. There were no young cocoanuts; the ground was covered with charred leaf-ribs and ashy boles, where they had been. The site of the house marked simply by a black oblong, blurred with half-consumed palm-leaves.

The next thing that I can remember is the look of a pair of miserable filthy hands — mine — scraping among the ashes of the house for something, anything that was not destroyed, while somebody whose name was Hugh Lynch kept saying to himself over and over again — "God, God, God!" Hugh didn't believe in God very much, which made it strange that he should say this thing.

There were bits of broken china in the rubbish — and stumps of what had been furniture — and a string of green beads. I picked that up and put it in

my pocket. I knew it well. It had caught the rays of the rising sun from the pillow next to mine, many and many a morning, before . . .

O God, before *what?*

There are some thoughts that stab you worse than any pain of the body. I have stood Red Indian tortures, in the South American days, without opening my lips. But that string of shining beads, and what I found under another heap of rubbish — a briar-root pipe with silver bands on it; none of mine — smashed my self-restraint like glass, and I cried out with rage and pain. He had done this! He had only waited till the gossip of Samarai assured him I was safely away at the other end of the country, to sneak up here into my land, my home, that I had made out of nothing, and destroy it — to burn my little nest, and carry away the sweet brown bird that had sung in it . . . to take my wife. . . .

Kari was gone — carried away by the brute whose face I had loathed from the moment I first saw it. She would never again run to meet me in the evening, down the paw-paw walk we had planted together. I should never hear her high sweet little voice calling out, "Me here!" from the living-room or the veranda, when I came home at noon. . . . Home! I had no home now. I had no plantation. I had no future. Was it a man or a devil who had acted thus to a harmless fellow who wished no human creature ill?

. . . I think if I had not found someone or something to vent my feelings on at that moment, I should have gone mad. As it was . . .

I threw the pipe on a coral bowlder, and lifted up another — the twin in size and weight of the great stone that was lying on the skeleton of the snake I had killed, months before. I beat the great lump of coral down on the pipe, and smashed it to powder, and kicked the powder to all the winds of the trades. And in the midst of this crazy work, my eye caught a movement in the bush.

I had not time to wonder, until now, where all the boys were. But the shaking of the trees, and the glimpse of a black head, evidently in full flight, turned my mind from the ruins of the cottage, as a mad dog is turned from his prey by the sight of another victim. I burst into the fire-blackened forest — it was burned only at the outer edge — and in a moment had Boromai, one of my head boys, struggling and shrieking in my hands. It took many minutes to quiet him — I think, perhaps, because I could not command myself enough to stop shaking him, while I told him to hold his tongue. At last, maddened by his ceaseless cries, I pulled out my 45 Colt, and held it to his head.

"Stop, and tell me everything, or I'll shoot you as dead as cannibal meat!" I said.

Boromai turned gray, and held his peace. I let him go then, and set him up against a tree — he seemed unable to stand — and, still holding the pistol, ordered him to speak. He shut his eyes tight, and sniveling the while, rattled out a brief story in his own tongue. Brief and bald though it was, I knew it to be true. I had handled natives long enough to judge when they

were lying, and when, by some unusual chance, they were not. Patently, Boromai had been frightened into truth.

This was what he said.

The Hanuabada girl belonging to Taubada (the Chief) had cried when he went away, but in a day or two she began borrowing new grass skirts from the other women, and painting her face continually, and looking out from the jetty every hour. And the talk of the plantation was that she expected Master to turn and come back. Some days, and some days, and some days, passed, and Master did not come back, but the Hanuabada girl still made herself fine as if for a yam dance, and looked very often out to sea. And some days and some days and some days passed. And the "sikoona" that belonged to the white man with the head like a lokohu (red bird of Paradise) came to the island. And the white man went to the house. The Hanuabada girl cried when she saw him, being a woman, and therefore foolish, but some days and some days passed, and the plantation boys saw them walking all the time about the shore together, and at evening they laughed and sang, and drank the wisiki from the stone jar, in the house, and so it was for days and days and days more. And Siri, who knew the white men's ways, and Siri's wife Bogi, went to the Hanuabada girl when the white man had gone to swim, and said to her that she did wickedly, and that Lineti would kill her, and the white man with the head of a lokohu, and Siri, and Bogi, and all the plantation boys, when he came back, and Siri and Bogi

said that they did not want to be killed. But the Hanuabada girl had gone mad with pride and the foolishness that is in women, and said that her white man would kill Lineti, and she would watch them fight, and at the end when Lineti was killed, she would dance the dance of the women who meet the warriors coming home, and they would put Lineti's skull on the ridge-pole of the house. And Siri and Bogi cried, because they saw that the white man had made puri-puri (sorcery) and given the Hanuabada girl over to devils. Then there were days and days and days, until it was a moon, and the white man said that Lineti would come back quickly. So Kari and the white man put all the small things of the house into the big "sikoona," and the "sikoona" boat was waiting at the place of the stones, but Kari would drink more wisiki before she went to the boat, and the white man drank too. And they came out from the house, standing up and running and falling down, and the white man was laughing like the crow that eats flesh, and Kari screamed after the same way as the cockatoos. And they both had fire in their hands. There had been no rain since Master went away, nor for a month before, and the plantation was dry as the sand when it is noon. The Hanuabada girl and the white man, screaming and laughing, went to the young cocoanuts with fire in their hands, and the men were all afraid, and ran away, only Siri came and cried out, and took the fire, and fought with them. He, Boromai, had run up one of the palms, the big old palms, and could not get away like the other boys, and he saw how the

white man hit Siri with a knife in the breast, and Siri lay down, and the blood came out, and the Hanuabada girl, when she saw the blood, laughed a great deal more, and began to dance the women's dance, but the wisiki had made her feet foolish, and she fell. Then the white man took her up and carried her to the boat, and the "sikoona" went away, and he, Boromai, was very near being burned to death, for the flames spread everywhere, and he could not get down from his tree till all the fire was finished, and the house and the little cocoanuts burned up. And because he knew the pigs would come out of the bush by and by, he had taken Siri down to the shore, and covered him up with sand. All that night the men and their wives had cried, and cried, and cried, and cried, and the next day while Boromai was sleeping, they had got up early, early, and taken the canoes away to Cape Endiadere, and those that could not get in had lain down on the beach and screamed, because they knew that Lineti would kill them all when he came back. All over the island they were hiding, and there was very bad fear on them.

"He tell true, Taubada," said the voice of Garia close beside us. "I been look along bush, I see flenty boy, he stop lie down. Taubada," scanning my face with savage keenness, "I think more better you telling Boromai you no kill all that boy, by-an'-by he come out."

Garia had read my mind clearly enough. I might have knocked about the boys in my first access of rage (killing was, of course, far outside my thoughts)

if they had appeared at once. I was quieting down now, and beginning to think. There seemed a prospect of action ahead, somewhere — and down that meager channel the confined and chafing waters of my mind rushed, as a river rushes when the lock-gate is lifted.

"You can go and tell the boys to come out!" I said to Boromai, in his own tongue. "Say that I will take them all to Cape Endiadere in the cutter to-morrow. Tell them the plantation is finished."

No second bidding was needed; the boys, swelling with importance, ran to collect their comrades, and I remained on the beach. The sun beat mercilessly down from the brassy sky; the hot wind, roaming about the lonely shore, cried in the dry pandanus trees. And as I waited there, again and again, with the tyrannous insistence of a chance phrase seizing on an overstrained mind, did Garia's cry on the jetty echo in my ears —"Taubada, no more, no more!"

CHAPTER V

TEN days afterwards, close on to sundown, I steered the *Bird of Paradise* into Rossel Lagoon.

Rossel Island is the last, loneliest outlier of the New Guinea continent — the very end of the scattered string of islands and islets, far removed from one another, that depends from the long "tail" of Papua in a southeasterly direction. No ships call there, no white men — with the rarest of exceptions — come and go. Its very shores are scarcely charted out; its swampy, mountainous, densely forested interior, only a few shipwrecked sailors have ever seen; and they, for the best of reasons, have never come back to tell what they saw.

Much as I had traveled about the coasts of Papua, my business or pleasure had never taken me so far out as Rossel, and I had some little difficulty in making my way there, among the innumerable uncharted reefs and atolls, and the treacherous currents of the Louisiades, the Bonvouloirs, the Ralicks, and the Calvados Chain. Garia, who was a Motuan from the Central Division of the mainland, could not help me at all, and I found myself constrained, half way through the four hundred mile run from Cape Endiadere, to put in at the island of Nivani, where they were talking

about making a Government station, and ask a few questions about the course.

It did not strike me at the time that I was acting rather foolishly — that the errand on which the *Bird of Paradise* was flying southward, was scarcely one that demanded advertisement. Governor Hammond, I afterwards heard, was already beginning to set his mark on British New Guinea, which had, up to this, been notorious as the most utterly lawless colony in the Empire; but of any changes that had taken, or were taking place at the executive end of the country I knew nothing, and in the state of mind which possessed me then, should probably have cared less if I had known.

So, as I have said, I ran into Nivani, found a brand-new magistrate making arrangements for a Government copra plantation, and putting up a tin-roofed bungalow — asked him if he knew the shortest and best course to Rossel Island, got an answer, shouted out to me from the beach, as I sat in my dingy — for I did not land — and sailed away again through Horaki Raki and Wuri-Wuri passages, southeastward for Rossel Island. I knew whom I should find there, as well as if Sanderson had left me a memoradum of his plans. Rossel was one of the islands to which he traded now and then, bartering tobacco and tomahawks, for red shell had a certain value in New Guinea; and I knew that the limited intelligence of the brute would carry him just far enough in the path of diplomacy to make him select the most out-of-the-way place he knew anything about — without enabling

him to see that that was exactly what any other person would expect him to do. If I had been dealing with a man of superior intellect, I would have looked for him somewhere near Port Moresby or Samarai, knowing he would argue to himself that the out-of-the-way corners would be the very first to be searched. But since it was Sanderson, a creature to my mind not much higher than the brutes with whom I had to do, I steered for Rossel as straight as I could go . . . and I was right.

We came under the lee of the island just after the sun had set, while the brief equatorial twilight was still lingering in the sky. There is something wicked about a New Guinea sunset; many old traders and shell-hunters will know what I mean, although it is almost impossible to describe it. The lurid purples and bloody reds of the western sky — the monstrous piling of cloud on cloud, fantastic with wild simulacra of routed and flying armies, of dragons and krakens and bat-winged nightmare beasts, such as only the trade-wind's giant hands can sculpture — the heavy stillness that so often falls on land and sea with the death of the sun, like the silence of a darkening room where one lies foully slain — all make the evening hour of this strange country as unlike as possible to the "holy eventide" that most of us remember well — too well — in the far-off northern lands, where May swells sweet in the twilight, and church-bells ring as the evening star shines out, and "peace comes down with nightfall."

. . . . . [illegible]

Do those who live in the placid countries — in the lands where all things always are the same — realize much of their own law-abiding nature is made for them by the surroundings of their lives? Do they know how every evil passion of humanity flourishes in these wild countries? How the fierce climate adds its fierceness to jealousy and rage, how the violence and cruelty of the savages among whom one lives, and the small account set on human life by men who are forced in their own persons to disregard danger of any kind, envelop one's mind like a poisonous miasma, stifling and even destroying the white man's hard-won heritage of pity?

I am not desirous of making excuses for myself. What I have done, I am being punished for, and the punishment is no doubt deserved; but as for repentance or excuse, I will have none of either.

Still . . . I have sometimes wondered whether I could have felt as calmly confident of my own purpose, as deadly certain that I should carry it out, in any other surroundings.

There is death in the very air of Rossel Island. There is death, violent and cruel death, in every word of its history. It is not a generation since the people of the island captured, imprisoned on a barren rock, and by slow degrees killed and devoured, a shipload of three hundred Chinese coolies, wrecked on their way to Australia. Murder is the profession of every Rossel Islander, torture his amusement. A man-hunt is so dear a delight to him that he will let the destined victim of the cooking-pots know his fate days before-

hand, in order to enjoy the pleasure of raising a hue-and-cry, and hunting the wretch from dawn to dusk, before the smothering-gang closes round to choke his life out with their practiced hands. Civilization, except in the form of a venturesome trader or two, has never come near this inferno of the islands, and it is safe to predict that when the opening up of the mainland comes — as come it certainly will — Rossel Island will be the last place to feel the change.

And the island looks what it is.

We came slowly up into the great semi-circular bay, shut in by sinister black hills, just as the sun had gone. The after-glow still lingered; there was light enough — an evil, copper-green glare, like the reflection from some witch's cauldron — to see the stark outlines of the hills, standing shoulder to shoulder in an amphitheater some three thousand feet high, about the death-still, dark green waters of the bay. The dense forest that covered the hills hung on them like a black cloak, down to the very lip of the sea; there was not so much as a yard of open sand where a man might find foothold. If there were eyes behind that curtain, watching us as we came in, there was nothing to tell of them. Only the white cockatoos, ghostly in the green twilight, flitted their lost spirits up and down the face of the dark cliffs, tearing the silence with their homeless wails.

"Taubada, no good this place," said Garia fearfully, as the anchor of the boat plunged down. "Flenty devil he stop. I too much fright."

"Which are you most afraid of — the devil or

me?" I asked, sitting down on the cabin skylight to fill my pipe. I have set out to tell the truth in this story, and I am consequently obliged to say that I felt perfectly cool and perfectly satisfied with myself, and as sure of what I was going to do as I was sure of finishing my smoke.

Garia looked at me before answering. I remember very well how his china-like, brown-and-white eyes shone out of his almost invisible face in the dusk — oddly strained they looked, and all the pupil showed.

"More fright along you," he answered; his teeth seemed to be chattering.

"Then you'd better hold your tongue," I said, smoking, and Garia held it.

So much so, that when a streak of something crimson came floating past the cutter, on the outward run of the tide, my Papuan reached at it and held it up to me, without a single word. It was a native waist-cloth of red trade calico — brand-new.

Then I knew that I was right, and that Sanderson was here.

. . . . . .

With the first glimmer of daylight, I started about getting the cutter under way. I calculated that the *Orokolo* had probably made the land at about the same point as I had, but that her master had run westward down the coast before the "trades," looking for some more secluded harbor. It could not be a difficult matter to find the schooner, wherever she might be — the island was not anywhere twenty miles in length.

So, after a hurried breakfast, I got the *Bird of*

Paradise going before a strong squally wind, and sailed out of the bay at a ten-knot gait. If the place had looked evil the night before, it looked deadly to-day. The tree-hung cliffs and hills were all blackish green, like moss on a wet stone; dark mangrove beds ran out here and there into the water from the foot of the mountain wall, the open lanes among their snaky, slimy roots gleaming unwholesomely under the fitful light of the day. And it rained — how it rained! The roar of the cataract that fell on the deck of the cutter hour after hour, as if Niagara had broken loose in the sky, almost drowned my voice when I shouted to Garia; the land was constantly blotted out by flying processions of gigantic mist-wreaths, rearing their spectral-hooded heads high above the hills and sweeping their shroud-like robes over miles of angry sea. Dark water, dark shore, and baffling, streaming mists — wild gusts of wind and rain, and the cutter lying over on her gunwale, with a runnel of foam flying aft along the deck — so passed the day. It was well on in the afternoon, and the rain was coming down more violently than ever — though one would scarcely have thought that possible — when Garia leapt to his feet with a yell that pierced through all the trampling of the rain, and roaring of the wind in sheets and sails.

"Taubada! Taubada! *Orokola* he stop!"

I had been busy putting about, and had not seen what the Papuan's quick eyes noticed so soon as it came in sight round the projecting point we were attempting to weather. . . . We had caught the schooner!

There she lay in the shelter of a narrow islet, safe from every wind that blew, and moored to the cliff itself. Her dingy trailed at her stern — empty. Her sails were neatly stowed; there was no smoke from the galley fire; there were no figures stirring on the deck.

"Taubada, I think all that people he been clear out," observed Garia anxiously.

How much the man knew or guessed of my intention in following up Sanderson and the schooner, I have never troubled to think. It struck me once or twice — just then, for example — that he was not altogether ignorant. But I had other things to think about.

"I dare say," was my answer. "Down sail!"

We anchored the cutter under the lee of the land, some distance from the schooner, and got out the dingy. The wind had gone down since we ran into shelter; the bay was empty and still, and there was not a sound to be heard, but the grinding of our rowlocks, and the far-away, faint trickling of some unseen waterfall.

"Bolted," I said to myself, without any special concern. I knew it could make no difference — in the end.

We went on board the schooner, and found her absolutely deserted, not even a native left in charge. There were signs of recent life on the shore — ashes of a fire which had been built up inside a stone hearth, white-man fashion; a pile of empty meat tins, a mouth-

organ, a broken whisky-bottle. I went over and examined the ashes. They were cold, even underneath the stones.

"Taubada," said Garia, his brown body trembling as he spoke, with mingled excitement, cold and fear. "I think boy belong Rossel Island, he see cutter come las' night, he run flenty, flenty fast, tell Sanasoni, boy belong Sikoona, girl belong Taubada. I think all that people be fright, he run long bush."

"Yes, that's about the size of it, Garia," I said. "Go back to the cutter and get me a lantern, the bag of trade in my cabin, and something to eat."

Loaded up with these things, and armed with a revolver and a sailor's knife, in case of trouble with the natives, I landed on the rocks at the water's edge — for here again there was no beach — and set off along the narrow scratch of track that I could see leading away into the forest above. I was quite clear as to my plans, and not in the least excited. Garia, curiously enough, was so strangely uplifted by something or other — one can never get at the depths of a native's mind, and I for one don't think it worth trying — that he sang wildly and fiercely all the way out to the cutter again, even stopping now and then to wave the paddles round his head, and let out a terrifying yell. I thought I recognized that last expansion of feeling; it was known among the mountain tribes as the death-cry. Its history is too long to write down, and in any case it is the reverse of pretty.

It was curious how that cry followed me; I could

hear it for quite a long time after I had left the sea behind, and began climbing up through the soaking, soppy forest.

I looked for, and found, tracks in the pasty mud of the path — prints of native feet everywhere, and plain among them one track that was not native — the print of a white man's foot, bare.

That was like Sanderson — to take off his boots in order to lose his tracks among those of the natives, and forget that a foot that has gone shod leaves a print a child could scarcely mistake. I had no difficulty in picking out and following his track for a mile or more. Then I lost it; the path turned into a river bed, after the manner of native roads in New Guinea, and thenceforward became one with the stream.

I stopped to look round. It was growing dusk here in the heart of the forest, though outside the rainy light still lingered. Drip, drip, went the wet from the trees on the spongy soil; a green and red parrot screamed spitefully at me, and dived in among the boughs. The air was full of the smell of rotting leaves and soaking earth. It looked like an excellent place to die and be buried in, this dark island; one could hardly imagine that anyone, even the aboriginals, enjoyed living in it.

Still, there must be natives, and there must be a village, somewhere near this track. The next thing was to find them.

I did find them. After a little trying about, I saw a clearing ahead, and in another minute was standing in the open square of a small village, very neatly built

of stick and thatch, all the houses set up on high supports, with attractive little porch-verandas about the doors.

I looked about curiously; I knew nothing of these people except by hearsay, and certainly had not been prepared for anything so well built as these houses. There were carvings lying about the doors, and elaborately ornamented bags, and a good many red and yellow flowers were to be seen in the village square, evidently planted there. A cat, fat and sleek, and apparently well treated, ran into the bush as I approached. It seemed hard to believe that this place could be the home of the desperate cannibals and man-hunters I had heard of. There was no one to be seen, but I knew very well the inhabitants were probably hiding within a few yards of me in the bush, looking at me from their unseen retreat, and wondering whether it were worth while to strangle and eat me or no.

I sat down on the veranda of the biggest house, and waited the return of the men with what patience I could. I knew very well that I could do nothing in this unknown island without the help of the natives, and it was important to gain their good will at once. I took out my pipe, cut up some trade tobacco, and began to smoke; knowing the smell would draw them in, if they were anywhere near. New Guinea has many tribes — many nations, indeed, one might say — but of them all, there is not one that does not love tobacco, strong trade tobacco in dark, treacly sticks, better than its own soul — if a Papuan has a soul.

Whether it was the tobacco, or curiosity to see the

unknown white man, or both together, I cannot say. But the bait took. By-and-by, when I turned my head a little to the right, I saw, standing half behind me, a group of about a dozen men. I had not heard them move, I had not seen them come. But there they were. I looked at them, and they looked at me, and both of us were silent.

I don't know what they may have thought of me, but I certainly thought them the worst-looking crew I had seen, even in New Guinea. They were rather small, very dark, and extremely ugly. Their heads were smaller, their noses flatter, than those of the mainland people, and I never saw such mouths before or since, save on a toad. They were almost naked, being clothed only in a curious national costume of eight or ten loops of rope, festooned about their hips. Most of them had pencils of white shell like tusks thrust through their noses. They had no spears or arrows, and this convinced me that the smothering stories were true, for the uncivilized tribes, as a general rule, go armed almost night and day.

It was necessary to get into touch with these people somehow or other, if I did not want to form the (literal) pièce de résistance for a strangling party. I took a couple of sticks of tobacco, broke them up, and distributed them. They were readily taken; Sanderson had familiarized the people with trade tobacco, in his various comings and goings, and the islanders were evidently fond of it. Taking care not to show all the riches in my bag, I pulled out a handful of beads, and offered them to a man who seemed to be something of

a chief, to judge by his elaborate feathered ornaments, and the deference paid him by the other men. He snatched at the gift, examined it, and bestowed it in the bag he carried over his shoulder — an odd little storehouse of betel nut, shell money, and other native valuables, worn by every man. A piece of fine toilet sponge off the reef was contained in each bag, as I noted with amazement — it seemed that these cannibals who did dainty chip-carving, and cultivated flower-gardens, also carried the refinements of life so far as to wash their tough black hides with delicate sponges, like any white lady. They began to talk now, in a hideous tongue like the snappings and snarlings of dogs, quite unlike anything I had ever heard before. I could not even make a guess at what they were saying, but I continued to let them know by signs that I was in search of the other white man, who had taken away my wife, and that I would give them much tobacco if they would help me to find him.

They were a little slow in taking up the meaning of my sign talk; I dare say they might not have grasped it at all, had they not guessed something of my errand from what they had seen themselves. The idea did penetrate at last, and then —

I was scarcely prepared for its effect. The islanders raised a yell that must have been audible down on the shore, and followed it up with a series of frenzied yelps — I can really call them nothing else — expressive of the wildest delight and eagerness. One after another, attracted by the noise, more men came running in from the bush (still in the same mysterious,

sudden fashion) until we had thirty or forty, all plunging and howling with excitement in the little square. There was no fear now that they would turn on me. I was going to give them what they liked better than anything in the world — a man-hunt.

Nothing would do them but we must start at once, in spite of the fact that night was darkening down. With difficulty I succeeded in making most of the crew turn back, save some five or six, who insisted on coming, and these I had to allow, though indeed one would have suited my humor better. A guide was what I wanted, not a pack of hounds. It seemed, however, that I was to have the latter or nothing.

I have no very clear recollection of the night and the day that followed. I know that I and the villagers, and half a score of other natives who turned up on the way, and insisted on joining the party, spent the hours from dusk to dawn, and from dawn to noon again, climbing, sliding, crawling, running, along endless miles and miles of forest track, almost every yard of which seemed to be perpendicular — sometimes up and sometimes down, but never level. I know that it rained sometimes so heavily that in full morning the light grew gray and dim, and we seemed to be running along in a water gloom somewhere at the bottom of the sea, with long, wet, weedy trails of greenery swinging low down from the dark canopy above, and giant taro leaves as big as tables, beaded all over with clammy dew, striking at us with their damp hands as we swept past. I remember that the island men ran low and softly, and carried no light even in the dark;

and that often they turned to me, when the day was coming, and mopped and mowed hideously to express their anger at my noisy movements, for now they were mad with the lust of the chase, and almost ready to kill the hunter, if he interfered with the pleasure of the hounds. But at times, when we stopped to breathe, they would gather round me, and feel my limbs admiringly, and measure the depth of my chest with their hands placed back and front, and show by their gestures that they thought I traveled well. We ate once or twice — I from the bag I carried, and they from strange bundles of banana leaf bound up with sinnet — and we drank many times from the streams, which were wonderfully clear and cold in all that clammy heat. We swam and waded across rivers, many and many of them, or it may have been that we crossed and recrossed one or two, following up their course — I cannot tell. The islanders watched for signs as they ran, and saw them so easily, so constantly, and (as I afterwards knew) so certainly, in places where I could find no trace myself, that I wondered at the keenness of their senses. Now and then there were things that I could understand — a rag of flannel, a dropped button, a footprint. . . . And, as the black hounds showed by word and look, and even by low beast-like whines of delight, as the day drew on, the signs began to grow fresher with our progress towards the center of the island. It was clear that we were catching up on our quarry.

It must have been about noon when the islanders began to slacken their speed, and creep stealthily along

the track that we were following — a downward-sloping scratch in the slippery black earth, much encumbered with fallen logs and drooping boughs. The rain was over now, the soil was steaming with heat and damp, and the sun had begun to force its way here and there through the thick forest roof in amazing lights of lurid green, like the colored flares in a firework show. The wonderful pale orchid that grows in Rossel, and nowhere else, seemed to have made one of its homes in this valley; a huge cluster of its ice-white, starry blooms sprang from the black bole of a fallen cottonwood tree, shining out in that gloomy place like one pure thought in an evil heart. . . .

Did such a simile arise in my mind at such a moment? I am obliged to confess that it did, incongruous as the fact may seem. If there is any man on earth made all of one piece — all consistent, in nothing self-contradictory — I have not met him, and I do not profess to be related to him. . . .

As I said, the men were creeping softly and stealthily now, looking ahead through the boughs from time to time. Presently the chief beckoned to me, and pointed to something a long way below.

We were standing half way down the valley, the ground falling sharply away below us. At the bottom there was a wide stony river bed, only half filled by a shallow hurrying stream. Under the lee of the opposite bank was a rough temporary shelter of sticks and leafy boughs, with a small fire burning outside. There was an old meat tin on the fire, and a man was

bending over it, watching it . . . a tall man in a filthy, ragged suit of ducks; a man with curly yellow hair. . . . Sanderson!

Eyes starting out of his head, and limbs trembling with excitement, the islander drew me back into the shelter of the trees, and began pantomiming again, while his twenty or thirty followers sat down on their haunches, lolled their mouths open, and looked more like dogs than ever — all but six, who detached themselves from the rest, and took their stand where they could peep over into the valley below.

The chief pointed to these six, and made vivid, violent gestures describing their office. They were to surround Sanderson (helped by the rest of the pack), and then, in an instant, to fasten upon him, and bear him down, one at each arm, one at each leg, one to kneel upon his chest, and one to hold his mouth and nose. This the chief described with incredibly fierce, yet incredibly silent pantomime, quite exhausting himself with the vigor of his efforts, yet making so little noise that he might well have been a dark phantom grinning and leaping unsubstantially through the dreams of some fevered brain, only the rustling, swinging branches far overhead, and the hurrying river below, being real.

I had expected some such difficulty as this, and was not unprepared. I had no intention in the world of letting loose this pack of black hounds on a man who was at least outwardly white like myself, nor did I intend any hand but my own do the work that I had come to do. There was no use attempting

to argue with the islanders, even if I had known their language. I did not try. I sprang up on the bank, where I could be seen clearly from below, and shouted out at the top of my voice—"Sanderson!"

I used to be known on the brig, in my old sailor days, as the only man whose voice could be heard from bowsprit to rudder chains through the howling of a Western Ocean cyclone. That shout waked up the valley. The natives sprang to their feet and snarled with rage; there were more nasty looks focused on me than I cared about, until I drew my revolver, and pointed it at the bunch of them. Before they had time to decide what they were going to do, I had taken a dozen long jumps down the side of the gorge, and was within a yard of the man I had hunted from end to end of the country.

He had dropped the tin he was holding over the fire when he heard my cry, and the tea it held was trickling over the stones in a dark-brown stream, but he had not run away, though I daresay he would have had time to plunge into the bush while I was getting down the cliff-side. I was surprised, almost disappointed, that he had the courage to face me; I had thought him of the rat breed through and through.

Perhaps I had forgotten that the cornered rat is brave. It was not by chance that Sanderson had come down to lonely Rossel, not for convenience that he had pitched his camp in the heart of an unknown and dangerous island. He was certainly hiding from me, in fear of me. Yet when hunted down he showed his teeth.

"What do you want in my camp?" he asked, with an oath between every word, and a foul name at the end. His hand went to the leather holster on his belt.

"You know what I want," I said. "Put that pistol on the ground."

As I had covered him with mine, he was obliged to obey. The metal rang hard on the stone.

Then I threw my own on the ground beside it, pulled the knife out of my belt, and dropped it too.

For just one minute we stood looking at each other, and, I think, measuring one another, mind and body — we two who had met but once before, on the little island of sun and flowers, and who were now met for the second and last time in this gloomy gorge of Death, from which we both well knew that only one would return.

Such was the evil ascendency of the man, and his power of conveying his thoughts without words, that even in that moment he succeeded in making me feel I had made myself absurd by chasing after him, mean and cowardly by using the natives to track him to his lair. He grinned at me like a dog before it bites, and I knew as well as if he had spoken that he was saying in his mind — "The man who could not keep his wife — The man who boasts and bullies. . . . The ugly, undersized brute who thinks himself a handsome fellow. . . ."

I don't suppose he had ever heard of hypnotism by name, but if he did not know and use its power, then no one in the world ever did. Evil himself, he had

power, like the devils of the Bible, upon other devils, and when he called on them, they came. The Papuan savagery latent in my gentle little wife — the meannesses and weaknesses of my own character — the wickedness, if one but knew it, of a thousand other souls, in other years and countries — all answered to his call, sure as the rivers run to meet the calling of the sea. I am near ashamed to write the words, but it is true that for a moment I felt inclined to beckon down my black hounds from the cliff above, and let them do their worst on the brute that was so much lower than they. A vile thought, and one that, in a less poisonous presence, would not have been mine.

I need hardly say that the impulse passed away as quickly as it had come. I turned half round and signaled to the islanders where they hung on the verge of the descent, eager to fling themselves down, yet somewhat fearful of my pistol, which they seemed to understand. I waved them back, and pointed to the weapon. They understood that too, and, chattering and snarling with rage, stayed where they were.

Now all this time — only a few seconds, in reality, but it seemed long — Sanderson had been standing just as I found him, his gold hair shining in the single ray of sun that crept down into the dusk of the gorge, his stained, ragged clothing, and haggard face, giving the lie clear enough to his deliberately insolent expression. I think, if he had appealed to my pity — but how do I know? I am telling the tale, not of what might have been, but what was.

"You know what I want," I said again; it seemed

that he would not speak. He kept eyeing me up and down, his hands twitching at his sides, his face a hard mask of hate . . . yet with something wild and frightened beginning to struggle behind the mask, as a wild beast struggles in a cage. I think he must have seen the truth in my face, for I was beginning to feel as if there were no weight in my body, and there was fire all down my spine, and there was a red mist creeping over everything before my eyes, the same mist that, once or twice or thrice in my lifetime, has set a mark forever upon certain hours. . . . Then, so suddenly that I had no time to guard, he struck at me with a knife (I had not known he had it) and spat almost in my eyes.

The knife missed as I sprang aside, just grazing the top of my shoulder. Even while I sprang, quick as a lightning picture seen for an instant in a storm, I saw the black hounds down in the valley, sitting on their haunches in a wide circle up and down the slopes of the cliff, and wagging their tongues with joy. It passed like the flash in the thunder-cloud, and all my jealousy, and agony, and rage, and all my very life, went out like the lightning itself in one straight blow that struck him on the temple, and sent the black soul that sheltered there, back to the dust from which it came.

He fell as a dead man falls, and lay on the stones, staring up at the sky.

The islanders were round him like a pack of carrion crows, before he had well touched the earth. They squatted about him, and felt his wrist and his

heart, and touched his eyes with their black fingers. Then they sprang to their feet, and raised a yell of laughter, and I knew them to say that he was dead, and that the sport had been good.

That is all I have to say about the death of Sanderson. I made the natives carry his body up on to the crest of the hill, and bury it deep in the firm soil of an open spot under some casuarina trees, knowing that they would not take the trouble to disinter it, if the job were well done. They growled a little over this, but I pacified them with the gift of a pound of tobacco from my bag, and promised them more when I should get back to my ship — expressing my meaning by signs that they seemed to understand. I knew well that they were bitterly disappointed at having had their quarry snatched from them twice — first living, and then dead — and, without being more afraid of the brutes than I have ever been of natives, I quite understood that my getting back alive to the coast was very much a matter of luck. The promised reward for safe-conduct had its effect, however, and they guided me by a short cut back to the bay where the cutter was moored, in a very few hours. I paid them there, as I had promised, and they disappeared into the forest, howling and whining with joy.

I have been particular in mentioning these matters, because of the misrepresentations from which I suffered later on.

All this time I had heard nothing about Kari, and indeed I had not greatly troubled myself about her, thinking her not worth it. But now that I was down

on the coast again, and ready to make sail, I thought of asking Garia had he seen or heard anything.

It was almost dark, but I did not care to hang about the neighborhood of the island in such a small boat any longer than could be helped, and we were just about making sail, in the ugly light of the afterglow, when I called out to my man through the flapping of the canvas —

"Did you see the woman?" Somehow, I could not make up my mind to speak her name.

Garia, who had been staring at me in silence since I came on board, stopped hauling, and leaned his dark face over the sail, close to mine.

"Taubada! You no savvy?" he cried.

"What?" I asked.

The Papuan pointed to the waters of the bay, sweeping his arm round with one of those expressive gestures of which uncivilized man alone has the secret.

"*Orokolo* he finished," he said.

And for the first time I noticed that the *Orokolo* was no longer there. Where had the schooner disappeared to? She had only a native crew; could they have stolen her, in the absence of their master?

"Taubada," said Garia, very talkative now, but still casting odd sidelong glances at me. "I stop here, I look along bush. By-'n'-by some boy belong Sanasoni he come run quick, quick, girl belong Taubada she come. All that boy he go 'long sikoona, flenty he cly, flenty flighten. Girl belong Taubada she go sikoona, she cly all same tockatoo, she sing out along me 'Taubada he go kill Sanasoni, kill Kari,

kill all the boy.' My word, he flenty flighten, that fellow! I laugh along him, I telling him Taubada he kill all that boy, that girl, by-'n'-by he eating him. All the boy he up-sail, he go out, Kari she go along. By-'n'-by too much wind he stop outside, one boy he taking wheel, he no savvy flenty, big, big squall he come. That boy he let go wheel, he sing out, he cly, all the boy he cly, Kari she cly, big, big, big wind he take sikoona, throw him down, by-'n'-by sikoona he no stop no more, boy he no stop, Kari no stop. Finish!"

"Good God!" I said. "Do you mean they let her get aback in one of those squalls, and sank her?"

"Yes, he get aback. He all — fool, I think. Very quick he all been go 'long hell, all the boy, Kari, she go," said Garia with considerable satisfaction. "Me miss'n boy. Me go 'long heaven, by-'n'-by some day."

"You little beast, couldn't you have put out and picked some of them up? Were they all drowned?" I asked.

"Yes, all finish that fellow," said my follower cheerfully. "Too much wind he stop, I no want I finish."

I could find nothing to say in answer to such a complete philosophy of life; in truth, I was little inclined to speak. The news had come with a greater shock to me than I could have believed. To know that Kari was gone — that the knot of my ill-starred marriage had been cut asunder by the sword that shears through all the tangles of all our lives at last — waked such a conflicting variety of feelings in my mind, that I could talk no more. We were run-

ning out of the bay in the growing dark before a light favoring breeze. I gave the tiller into Garia's hand, and went and sat down upon the skylight, looking forward to the yellow sunset, and the weltering black sea, and the night that was swiftly closing down on all.

I thought of Kari as I had known her in the old days, a gentle, frightened child following me through the blue ranges of the Astrolabe, almost worshiping me as her rescuer and protector — a growing girl in the Mission, waxing coquettish and pretty as she matured, but always with a ready welcome for "Lineti" when he called — a woman, my wife, my little brown bird in our own little nest, loving me after the capricious fashion of a native, yet somehow making warm my heart for her — and afterwards —

No! I put that thought away. She was dead. I would remember her as I had loved her, as I had seen her last. The other Kari, the wild Papuan savage, with all the evil nature of her cannibal ancestors suddenly awaked and brought to daylight by the black influence of the blackest hearted of men — that Kari I would forget. She slept in the heart of these lonely coral seas, let her sins against me sleep with her.

The play was played out — the last act of that long tragedy over. I was free to begin my life again.

CHAPTER VI

RAIN, rain! such rain as one knows only in New Guinea — stupefying one with its day-long roar on the iron roofs, jetting out of the overflow pipes of the tanks in a solid bar of water that digs deep holes in the ground; beating down the great heads of the coco-palms till their eighteen-foot leaves droop like dying ferns, and interposing a wall of tumbling water between the jail and the spongy grass-plot, and the belt of alligator-haunted bush that runs along the margin of the beach. The big island out there, that seems, on a clear "southeast" day, to float on the verge of the horizon like some purple orchid bloom blown down from the Astrolabe ranges, looks like nothing but a dark smear or a piece of wet blotting-paper, this wretched morning. The native prisoners have been taken off their road work, and are squatting on the long veranda, passing round their bau-baus (bamboo pipes) from hand to hand, and chewing betel nut and lime. They look cheerful and happy, and some of them are laughing consumedly at a yarn which is being recited by a murderer from the Hydrographers' Range country, who is doing a year in jail for eating his wife — "the reason assigned for the rash act" being that the lady talked too much.

. . . They flutter like wild birds in a cage, at first, these native prisoners, and then, just as one

begins to think they will break their hearts and die, they settle down quite comfortably, and take to their regular meals and work without giving any trouble. Freedom is ahead of them somewhere, somehow — a good many moons, whether six or sixty they don't know, and it is all the same to them, since their minds don't stretch beyond the first figure in any case. And there is more food here than they have ever had in their lives. And they have blankets and tin spoons, and other luxuries they'd give you their wives and children for, out back. And Wilks is indulgent; when there is no work to do (quite often there is not) he lets them sit and yarn and smoke by the hour, on the veranda, or in the shade of the water tanks. They are a very clubbable folk, these Papuans. Every jungle or river village has a great club-house, where the bucks of the tribe sit and boast to one another, and the old men tell one another how much better things were done on the river when they were young — and somebody gnaws a rib, and somebody picks a tibia, and somebody hospitably gives his neighbor a bite off a skull, and everyone is sociable and jolly. . . .

Minus the ribs and skulls, it is much the same sort of thing here on wet days. Yes, I think the colored ninety-nine hundredths of the jail is fairly happy. As for the white fraction —

Wilks interrupted me just then, coming in for some tools. He stopped to tell me the yarn that the Hydrographers' native had been spinning; a warder from the East End had interpreted it for him. Here it is, word for word —

"I think very small of you people on the coast. You are afraid to go inland, you never see the people and houses in the mountains. I have seen everything in Papua, everything, everything, everything; I have walked about very much when I was with the police many moons ago. One time I went far, far, far inland, up into the high, high, very high hills. And the people are silly like bats, and I could do what I liked with them. There was one village where they all had tails like kangaroos, and they were very silly, silly, silly people there, and I played tricks on them. They had holes in the floors of their houses for their tails to hang down when they went to sleep, and I used to go under the holes at night, and I would tie a knot in every man's tail as it hung down, and then I would run through the village, and scream, scream, scream that the enemy were coming with spears and arrows, and all the people would jump up. But the knots in their tails would catch, and they would fall down, fall down, fall down, howling, and I would laugh, I would laugh till there was no more breath in my belly."

"Do you believe that yarn?" I asked.

Wilks sucked his pipe, and seemed to listen to the bellowing rain.

"I dono," he said meditatively. "If I was 'ome in Poplar, or livin' in barracks in Agrar or Calcutter, same as in the old days, I'd laugh at all that 'eathen rubbish fast enough. But this place ain't Poplar. Not yet Indiar. And — dono."

"Why," he added, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and turning his childlike blue English eyes on me — "Why, there's that johnnie from Mekeo — the one that's in for roastin' a sorcerer alive on a stick — he says to me the other day that he sor that sorcerer with his own eyes kill his brother — the man's brother — by giving him puri-puri stuff, and the boy was so dead they stuck a spear into him, and the gas came out bustin', like when you pick a child's balloon. And when 'e'd been dead twenty-four hours — which is too long for a man to be above ground in this country — the sorcerer, he made the boy alive again, and the Mekeo man sor him walkin' about, and talked to him. And then in another day he died again, and the sorcerer, he dried up that time, and wouldn't or couldn't do nothing, so he planted the boy, and went for the sorcerer. It's as true as I'm standing here, Mr. Lynch. And if you please, sir, I'll trouble you to pick up all those papers, and put your cell in order — a gentleman of your education should know better than to let his cell get into a proper hurrah's-nest!"

He went away, and I tidied up the place — it was something to have even so much occupation. Then I sat listening to the thunder of the endless rain — there had already been five inches, though it was not three o'clock — until the noise nearly maddened me, and I took out this book to escape for a little from myself.

For this is one of the bad days. They come again and again, and all the pluck one has is wanted, to pull

one through without "breaking out." Breaking out! the phrase means nothing when you read it in some police report at home: but let anyone try for himself what it means to endure years of confinement, and he'll have news to tell me.

Yet one must endure, and without complaint. For when a punishment is deserved and just, it is best to take it with one's mouth shut.

I am being punished for breaking through the fence that reserves the right of retributive action to certain classes. Soldiers may kill in revenge for national insults. Judges may kill for the safety of society. In nearly all primitive communities, gold-mining districts and so forth, where there is no law but that of natural justice, a committee of leading men will hang half a dozen offenders up to a tree before breakfast, and no one will blame them. But if you are not a licensed slaughterman, and if the law of civilization obtains in your country, you are a murderer if you do what a hundred thousand decent men would do tomorrow — were there no public opinion to hold them back. The man who has never felt that he could and would kill another without remorse, did he not fear the consequences, must be made of very different clay from most.

Do I complain? Not of the law. Having carried out justice for myself, taken the chances, and found them turn up wrong way out for me — as I knew they might — I have nothing to complain about. I knew that everyone could not be allowed to act as I acted. Whether it be right, as I hold, or very wrong indeed,

as my kindly, though interfering visitors from the mission have tried to impress on me.

If I have a grievance, it is simply this — that society makes you pay, not only the just penalty for your offense against its laws, but also the unjust penalty of the loss of your whole life's prospects.

Four years for manslaughter in Portland, or Berlin, or New York, or French Cayenne, or here in Port Moresby's little toy jail — on parole, with books and light work, and meals from the tin hotel — it is all the same. One and all mean ruin. One and all mean a crippled life: a man maimed in a limb of his character, and limping through all the rest of his journey. Is that just?

But then — your friends, the true ones, will stand by you . . . will they not?

There was a picture I used to be very fond of, in the year I spent at my London crammer's. They had it in the drawing-room: it was an excellent copy of a painting by a new artist — Burne-Jones. It represented a man and a woman, dressed in some curious mediæval costume, sitting on a heap of ruins, under a stormy sky. They were surrounded by stones and briars, and there was not a living creature in all the landscape but themselves. Yet you could see that the storm, and the loneliness, and the catastrophe, whatever it was, that had beggared them and made them homeless, had no power to touch them, since it had left him to her, and her to him. They were holding hands, and looking in one another's eyes: and what they saw there seemed to be enough for them.

On bad days — like to-day — I find myself remembering that picture. I think, if I had it here, I should tear it into rags; and throw the rags down the north-west wind, howling on its way to sea. For it is a false picture, false as the Father of all lies.

There are no such women.

I am not writing an autobiography, so I may pass over a good deal of what happened after the loss of the *Orokolo*. In brief, I sold my cutter, abandoned Clare Island, and took up my abode in the Central Division, hundreds of miles away from the Eastern coast and its memories. I had made up my mind to forget.

I don't know that I should have cared particularly, even had I found that Port Moresby knew the true story of Sanderson's end. But it did not. The loss of the *Orokolo* was known — pieces of her wreckage had been sighted in the islands, and Papua at large drew its own conclusions, when Sanderson was seen no more. The death of Kari and the burning of my plantation were known, simply because I told them; but nobody asked me for details. It is possible that I did not look as if I should encourage questions. There are two sides to the possession of an alleged ugly temper.

I was not penniless, for I had over two hundred lodged with a North Queensland bank, and the sale

of the boat had brought me a hundred and eighty. I might have done something towards the start of another plantation with this, but the idea did not appeal to me. It may have been that the settling-down impulse had worn out, as it does only too soon with us of the gypsy breed, how much soever we may hanker after the unchanging rest, and the year after year peace, and the little quiet home of our very own — for a time. The time comes to an end: that's the trouble of it.

Well,

> "Send the road is clear before you,
> When the old spring fret comes o'er you."

because, if you are one of the wandering breed, you'll go, whether it is clear or not, and Heaven help anything or anyone that stands in your way!

There's no spring in New Guinea, but for all that, "the old spring fret came o'er me" very strongly just then, and I had not been a week in Port Moresby before I was laying in stores, and engaging boys, for a bird-shooting trip into the interior. Bird of Paradise and other skins fetch excellent prices now-a-days, and there was no more profitable way in which I could have employed my time.

I had no white man with me. I was always good company for myself when I chose: there's no pair of mates in Australasia suit each other better than Hugh and I. Garia was with me, as usual: he had become quite a devoted servant by now, though it would be hard to say on what grounds, as I was never

indulgent to my boys, or showed any special feeling for them — probably because I hadn't any.

I can tell you, the hills were calling, in that clear southeast weather, when the gray-green eucalyptus country all round Port Moresby was crackling with dry heat, and the tracks were soft with dust, and the blue wall of the Astrolabe Range, as it shows out from the top of Paga Hill, rose sharp and clear into the sun-bleached sky. I was glad from the bottom of my heart to tramp off at the head of my train of naked mop-haired carriers, through the township and along the cliff, and inland across the wide sun-baked flats, going towards the "Never-Never" once again.

And surely, it was for luck (I thought) that, just as we were leaving the inhabited country, a beautiful chestnut mare, ridden by a slim girl in a holland habit, should sweep down on the procession from behind a sudden turn, to give us our last glimpse of the world we were leaving behind, in the pleasantest possible form!

It was the Governor's daughter, of course — Stephanie Hammond. Everyone in Papua knew her name by this time, and guessed that, being an only child, she had been called for her father, Stephen Hammond. I had not seen her during the week of my stay in port, but I had heard of hardly anything or anybody else. They said she was going to marry the Government Secretary: but the rumor was so far without any official sanction. As Carolan was very

well connected, and would be well off, and as he was not more than twenty-seven, good-looking, steady, and popular, most of us — the outer barbarians of Papuan society — thought the event could only be a matter of time.

She came cantering along the grass, sitting straight and gracefully, her hair braided in endless rows all round her head under her sun-helmet, her slight pointed foot in its English boot just showing under her habit. As we came nearer, she checked the mare, and tried to make her stand — the beautiful creature was dancing and fidgeting at the line of loaded carriers, and seemed not a little inclined to bolt.

Of course, I could do nothing less than come forward and take the mare's bridle, lifting my hat and apologizing, as I did so. And thus we met face to face for the first time — Stephanie Hammond and I.

The mare quieted down the instant I touched her. I had known she would — there is nothing that goes upon four legs or two wings that I cannot tame when I want. The rider, on the other hand, colored a little and flashed a quick, curious look at me, her lips falling slightly apart. For the moment I thought her frightened — she was such a fragile slip of a young girl, and the mare was really a fiery mount for her. Then I saw that she was not thinking of her horse at all, but of me, and that she had (in the language of popular gossip), "heard things," and didn't know what to make of them, or of myself.

It was only for a moment that I could read her

expression. Then she drew down the blinds, as a society woman can, and presented a perfectly blank front to my curious gaze, as she made her little speech of courteous thanks. She looked steadily at the amber handle of her whip while she spoke, and did not show me her eyes again.

But I had had one look in right through those blue windows before they were curtained, and I was not offended by what I saw there.

"Please allow me to hold your horse until the carriers are well away," I said, keeping my grasp of the bridle.

"You have quieted her wonderfully," answered Stephanie Hammond. She put the snaffle rein inside the curb, and her eyes followed her hand. "Can you always quiet a horse by touching it?"

"Usually," I said, enjoying the sight of her eyelashes, which turned up quite wonderfully at the ends. She had a pointed chin with a dimple in it, and her lips had the perfect surface of a flower petal. . . .

. . . Sometimes, long ago, riding through the green forest tracks of the South Sea Islands, I have come upon a bed of sensitive plant beside the road, and have wondered to see how surely those delicate leaflets felt the approach of the heavy hoofs, many yards away, and shrank down as they came near. . . . Can it have been, that morning on the lonely out-back road, that the soul of the young girl, a hundred times more sensitive than the mimosa leaf, felt in all its delicate fibers the near approach of something strange, strong, and terrifying, and instinctively drew

back into itself? . . . The Governor's daughter never looked up, but as I continued to delight my woman-starved eyes on the sweetness of her face, she grew slowly pink, down to the very edge of her dress.

"You rude brute!" I said to myself. The carriers were almost out of sight round the turn in the road. I let go my hold of the bridle, drew my hand once down the chestnut's satiny neck, in the way that a horse likes, and stepped back.

"I think your horse will be all right now," I said. "I'm extremely sorry we scared her."

"Please don't trouble about that: there was no harm done," said the sweet voice — it was a very sweet voice indeed. "Thank you very much for holding her. Good-by."

. . . Had she looked up again, or had she not? The flying hoofs of the mare were far away down the road, in a cloud of dust. The carriers were clear out of sight. There was not a sound but the wind in the eucalyptus trees, and the harsh clatter of a leather-neck on a bough.

I turned round, and got on my way again.

"I believe you didn't — you perfect darling!" I said.

. . . . . .

I would like to write a good deal about that bird-shooting trip only that it has nothing in itself to do with the story. I'd like to try and tell — though nobody could tell — how the country looks up among the high ranges, when you come out of your tent of a morning, into the air that is like a sea of crystal, and

stand beside the fly, looking miles and miles away, over cone-shaped and castle-shaped peaks of every shade of purple and blue, and down enormous gorges that are fiery green in the sun, and black as black velvet in the dark at the bottom, with a streak of foamy white showing here and there to mark the course of some big river that has never a name or a place on the map. You think the side of that gorge is within a cricket-ball throw, until you see white specks like flies flitting up and down its walls, and then you understand that those are cockatoos, and that the scale of the whole landscape is so huge that you yourself scarcely stand for the value of an ant in a scuttle of coals. . . . Your boys are still asleep, and there isn't a native village in a day's walk, and not a white man but yourself has ever climbed these ranges. The place is as God made it, and as it will remain, colossal, still, and calm, for many a score of years after the tide of civilization has swept into every other quiet nook on earth. It belongs to the wild creatures of the mountain — the wallabys and wild boars and pythons; to the birds and creeping things; to the marvelous butterflies, big and swift as swallows, that flash in gorgeous blues and greens, and gilded orange, and gay black and white and crimson, about every rare cluster of blossom that lights up the somber forests.

Lovely and peaceful as they are, you make your way into these unknown lands under no truce with Nature. Slip across the edge of safety anywhere, anyhow, and she will sweep her ocean of primeval forest over you as passionlessly and relentlessly as she sweeps her At-

lantic or Pacific over some struggling ship overtaken by a storm. Let but a man's carriers desert him in these out-back wildernesses — let a rock fall and lame him — and it is all New Guinea to a broken biscuit that the bower-birds will find a white skeleton, well-cleaned by the ants, under the fern when the rainy season is over, and will have a couple of phalanges, and a loose vertebra or two, to put among the bright bits of shell and stone that decorate their dancing-grounds. . . . "On ne badine pas"— with the bush country of Papua.

There was no question of trouble in my expedition, happily. My boys were a decent lot, and contented with their job. Our swags full of the beads and tomahawks and tobacco brought us sweet potatoes and yams in plenty, at the villages, and our shot-guns saved us from encroaching too much upon the tinned provisions. We did very well in birds: I had a couple of hundred skins of birds of Paradise, every kind, from the common Raggiana to the rare blue of the high ranges, besides many of the giant Gaura pigeons, and scarlet king-birds, and miscellaneous prey of other kinds, by the end of a couple of months. The stores were lasting splendidly: we hadn't met with any hostile tribes — at least, none that I could not manage to make peace with, though most of them were inclined to spear us at first sight, through sheer alarm. I had found colors of gold in two creeks that were within a reasonable distance of the coast, and hoped I might do well out of the discovery later on. I was fit, and my

boys were contented, and it seemed that the best thing I could do, undoubtedly, was to keep on the trip for another two months.

. . . Instead of which, I struck my camp one morning at six, told the carriers we were bound for home again, and started off down an atrocious gully that was called a track, with the compass pointing me to Port Moresby, as fast as ever I could go.

The truth was, that trip was haunted.

By nights, when I'd be lying on my bed of cross-way sticks, under the low roof of the fly, with a blanket pulled up round my shoulders,— the moon, as round and white as a shilling, looking in under the V-shaped door, and the frogs booming out a Wagner chorus somewhere in the river-gorge below, I used to think of what we had been doing during the day, and see it all over again — the five-foot cassowary that had lifted its great blue helmet out of the bush, right beside me, as I was sighting for a long shot at a hornbill — the gorgeous flash of a crimson bird of Paradise, shooting like a comet across some sunlit valley — the waterfall I had discovered, four hundred feet high, dropping straight as a plumb line into a boiling pothole as big as a city square — the skinning and preparing of the birds after sunset, the lazy smoke by the camp-fire before turning in. . . . Musing dreamily over all these things, and watching, with half-shut eyes, the flutter of the leaves outside the door, I would listen to the murmur of the river over its stones far away below, until the moon and the tent and the swaying

bamboo boughs faded away, and the song of the water grew ever faint and fainter, and I was . . .

No, not asleep! for just at that moment something always wakened me with a start — a face that grew out of the darkness, circled round by a luminous haze, and hovered close to my pillow, looking at me. It came and went almost like a flash of lightning, for it always wakened me instantly, and once I was awake, it was there no more. It startled me, though I am not easily startled, and I used to spring half up, and stare round the tent, looking into every corner, and wondering where I was. . . .

Still the calm moon, and the swaying fronds of the bamboo, and the whisper of the stream. . . . I was in the Owen Stanley Range, alone with my boys. . . . The camp fire was leaping and dying outside the tent. The wind blew down from the icy summits, lonesome-sounding and chill. . . . She was not here.

Yet I had seen her face, her blue eyes, her dark soft hair woven in innumerable braids, her mouth, with its curious wax-like smoothness and dark red color,— and she was looking at me, straight and steadily, as she had not looked in real life. Her lips were a little apart, her eyes showed wonder, and a certain questioning. And always, the little haze of light clung about her head.

Now, if the truth must be told, I had seen a good many charming faces hovering through my dreams, in the wandering years gone by — faces of many nation-

alities, and many kinds of loveliness: some that weren't even lovely, but that one liked as well as if they were: some — Well, this is not my "carte du Pays du Tendre." . . . Everyone who has ever been in love, after any of the various ways of loving, knows that this appearance of a face in the darkness, circled with light, is as common as fancy itself. Who has not read of it a hundred times, in poetry, good, bad, or indifferent? Who does not at least remember Tennyson's beautiful picture of the

"Passionate, pale, proud face, star-sweet on a gloom profound."

in "Maud," the poem loved by lovers?

But of all the dark and fair, and fierce and gentle, and budding and full-blown beauties who had played this pretty trick on me in old times, not one had *looked at me as if she saw me.* Now this one did. It was that, that used to waken me so suddenly, in the first light sleep of night and sometimes even in the deep dead rest that comes with the cool of dawn. This face, unlike any of its predecessors (Stephanie, human snowdrop that you were, you would scarcely have cared to be classed with some of them) was not a mere mechanical painting in the dark, of something that I had seen before, line for line and color for color. It was a vital, clinging entity with an existence of its own,— and it saw me.

Sometimes it appeared shadowed by the white sun-helmet, sometimes without. I saw it look pale at times, and bright at other times. Once it came with all

its hair floating like seaweed in water about the head; that time, its eyes were sad and dreamy, and shadowed by some uncomprehended trouble. But however it came, it shook my nerve each time as never a cannibal in war-paint, poising his spear at my breast, could have shaken it. And the strangest thing about the whole business was that I was really not in love with Stephanie.

The slightness of our acquaintance would have been no protection against such a catastrophe, if I had been inclined to it — experience at least had taught me that. I admired the Governor's daughter extremely, and thought her not at all like any other girl I had ever known — there was something so fragile, yet so gallant, so tender, yet so brave, about this sailor's child with her father's name. But I did not want to kiss her, or sit out under the palms in the moonlight with my arm round her waist, talking honey-treacle nonsense — or to hold that slim foot of hers in my hand, and spring her to the saddle, or set my shoulder for her light weight when she dismounted, standing so that she would be obliged to rest there just a moment longer than was strictly necessary. . . . At least, not any more than I wanted to do any or all of these things for any charming girl, on general principles.

Then, what did it all mean?

There did not seem to be an answer to that question — except that answer that I made for myself, when I struck camp, and started away hot-foot for Port Moresby. The vision, fancy — call it what one may — was certainly getting on my nerves. I had some

idea that I might escape from it, in escaping from these lonely, unknown ranges, where fancy might well run wild — and, in any case, I had not much notion of stopping up in the Owen Stanley Country with the ghost of a girl haunting me, when the girl herself was alive to exorcise the shade, only a few days away.

It took us over a fortnight to get back: some days we made twelve miles or more, going from sunrise to sunset, some days less than half of that. It has been said that travel in the far interior of New Guinea resembles nothing so much as the progress of an ant up and down the teeth of a comb; and indeed, the simile is not far out. I have a decided objection, myself, after a hard day's climbing up and down, to be obliged to camp in full view of the small spot from which I set out early in the morning: but in some parts of the high ranges, that is the commonest of trials.

It happened one evening that we camped on a shoulder of the range, just beside a drop that showed you half New Guinea lying all pale and blue and silver-threaded with rivers, right under the lee of an overhanging fringe of green pitcher-plants. A small waterfall slipped down the cliff with a pleasant murmur, off to the right, and after the boys had filled the billy-cans, and were starting to make tea and boil rice, I went down to the edge of the fall, and found a dry stone where I could sit and smoke.

It sounded very sweetly, murmuring away there in the gathering dusk, with the casuarinas sighing overhead, and the faint crackle of the camp-fires just audible in the background. I listened rather lazily to it

for a minute or two, wondering what it reminded me of. Then I remembered — Stephanie Hammond's voice!

"This is beyond a joke!" I said, getting to my feet and banging the ashes out of my pipe. "How can a girl's voice be like a hundred tons of water falling over a cliff? Next thing I know, I shall be saying that her smile is the morning, and her eyes are the stars, and that the birds are singing her praises — like a blessed poet in a blessed Elizabethan madrigal! If I were in love with her — but I never did cut any of those silly sixpenny-ballad capers even when I was in love — with any of them — and so far as this goes, I swear I shouldn't worry if I'd never see her again in my life!"

It will hardly be believed, but it is nevertheless true, that two days later, having thought scarce a bit about the Governor's daughter in the interval, I heard a little green bird say "Stephanie! Stepha-nie!" as clearly as if it were talking. I had always thought that bird said "Bread and cheese" before: but it seemed to have changed its tune. And on the next day we had to cross a very high shoulder of the range, where the air grew damp and cold, and there was nothing but a sea of rolling clouds below the little native track we followed, and English flowers grew by the way, lovelier than all the blazing coral-blossoms and splendid frangipanni of the plains, to the eye of the northern born. I found white wild strawberry flowers here in the moss, and forget-me-nots, and in one place even violets, slight and pale, but exquisitely sweet.

"Violets . . .
Sweeter than lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath,"

came to my mind, as I stooped to pick them.

"I don't think she *did* look up," I said half-aloud, sticking the flowers in the breast-pocket of my shirt. Then I fairly stamped on the ground, and wondered for the twentieth time had the sun got at my brain?

We were nearing the coast now, and as we went downwards day after day, it grew gradually hotter, until the memory of those cool misty valleys where the violets grew, far above the clouds, seemed like a dream of some past life of bliss. In the low-lying plains of the rivers, crossing leech-infested swamps where huge alligators lay hidden, and the torturing scrub-itch insect clung to every leaf and stem, the air was hot and heavy as steam from some gigantic cauldron, and the carriers lagged, near as we were to home. All day I walked, soaked through with heat, and sat at night by my camp-fire drying my few clothes, and making futile "smudges" to smoke away the bloodthirsty hordes of mosquitoes. I got thinner with the heat, and of course there was fever about, and my temper suffered a little. Garia was amazingly patient when I snapped at him, and seemed worried when I would not eat: he used to spend a good deal of his time slaving over the cooking pots, trying to make something that would tempt my appetite — without much result, as a rule. He used to watch me, too, with those melancholy brown-glass eyes of his, when I sat doing nothing in

camp of an evening, and his conclusions seemed to trouble him.

"I can't eat your beastly curry, Garia," I said one night, handing back the tin plate to him. "I don't know what stuff you've put in it."

"Me put all same thing me been put all-a-time," remonstrated Garia, holding the plate out. "He good curry. More better you eat him, Taubada."

"Take it away, I tell you, I've got fever," I said irritably.

Garia laid a brown claw on my forehead, and withdrew it, shaking his head until the drops of the last shower flew from his bush of hair right and left.

"No got," he pronounced.

"I've got something," I said, staring blankly at the dark green rampart of forest that shut in our little camping-ground. The moon would not top that mighty wall for hours to come, but the sky was sparkling with stars. There was something comforting about those stars: they reminded you that you and everybody else would be dead and buried by and by, and that nothing at all would matter then. . . .

"Taubada," said my Papuan solemnly. "You no got fever. You think along one girl. I savvy."

"The devil you do!" I said. "It seems you know more than I do."

"Yess-s, I savvy flenty, too much I savvy all the time," assented the modest aboriginal. "Who belong that girl, Taubada? I no hear him." (I have not seen her.)

"There isn't any girl, Garia," I said.

"I think you lie flenty, Taubada," remonstrated Garia, in a respectful tone.

"Oh, all right, I'm lying," I answered. It seemed too much trouble to contradict anybody about anything.

"Taubada, that girl got father belong her?"

"Yes, got father. You're laboring under a misapprehension all the same, my good Papuan."

"I no savvy that-fellow talk. Father belong him he want flenty too much big pig, too much toya (armshell), too much tooth belong dog?"

"Yes, Garia, she's too expensive an article altogether, and in any case I'm not bidding."

"You no got?"

"No got."

Garia rolled a banana-leaf cigarette industriously.

"Father belong girl, I think more better you-me kill him," he observed, in a casual tone.

"Afraid that cat won't fight, Garia. 'New Guinea way' is of no account here. Besides, the young lady has no regard for me — girl he no want."

"I think you lie, Taubada," repeated the monotonous Garia. "All the girl he want you. You flenty good fellow man. You fight all same bush-pig. You say 'Damn' all same Cap'n belong ship. All the Papua girl, he like."

"Yes, but you see, this is a white girl, Garia."

"White girl he no all same?"

I burst out laughing. Garia had at all events driven the dark mood away. As for his question, it was what might be honestly termed a "poser."

"Well, Garia," I replied seriously —"that requires more thought than I am prepared to give: but a very wise man has said that

> 'The Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady
> Are sisters under their skins.'

What do you make of that?"

"I savvy what he say," replied Garia, answering the implied tone of patronage. "He say, all the woman, he all same, underside skin belong him. He talk good, Taubada?"

"By Jove, Garia, I think he does!" I said. "And so do you, my woolly-headed child of Nature —'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings'— Go off and make the boys turn in: we'll have an early start to-morrow."

"You eating that curry, Taubada?" begged the persistent one.

"Oh, hang the curry, it's cold," I said. But it tasted well, after all.

CHAPTER VII

"WHEN I was prospecting for gold about the D'Entrecasteaux," proclaimed Worboise, in a loud bumbling bass, "I used to know a native called Adilawa."

Everyone on the veranda exchanged looks of resignation, and prepared to drop off into the state of coma infallibly produced by Worboise's reminiscences. I suppose they were interesting enough in their way, if one hadn't had too much of them, and if they had not invariably turned on matters already so familiar to most of us as to have lost all spice of interest or excitement. Strangers used to say that Worboise was one of the most entertaining characters they had ever known. So he was — for a day. But we had him all the time, and we were wearied of him as only one wearies of people in the narrow circles of the Never-Never lands, where everyone has full opportunity to know a great deal too much about everyone else.

All Port Moresby was on the veranda that night, the wide veranda of Government House, overlooking the tangle of low uncleared bush on the hill, and the mangrove swamp below, and the great moon-silvered harbor, with Fishermen Island lying low and black on the horizon, like a sleeping whale. The new Governor, rather to the astonishment of the settlement,

had made a point of encouraging the scant dozen of respectable whites to drop in in the cool of the evening, and exchange their views on Papuan matters generally over a cup of coffee and a smoke. I don't think any of us mistook this condescension for an example of the equality that usually prevails in small and primitive communities. We quite understood that Governor Hammond was studying us for his own purposes, and that his attitude towards his loyal subjects of the capital was very much that of the conscientious rector's lady towards the deserving poor in her "district." Professions, like men, have the defects of their qualities, and the training of the navy does not make for breadth in matters social.

It was certainly an odd collection of humanity that assembled that evening on the veranda, after the sun had set in a blaze of marigold and geranium behind the swaying palms, and the transparent tropic dark had filled the hollow of the hills with its cooling flood. A lean, yellow-faced brace of Government officials in loose duck suits — a gold-miner with cheeks boiled to fish-belly white in the steaming bush of the Louisiades — a schooner captain, ruddy and bulbous-nosed — a storekeeper or two, tidy, dull, and curious — one or two bêche-de-mer traders from the unknown West — a plump missionary — a French recruiter — Worboise himself, appallingly fat in his shrunk khaki coat, reënforced by a blue singlet instead of a waistcoat — myself, in as much of a white shell-jacket suit as the cockroaches and silver-fish had left me — His Excellency, and His Excellency's daughter — this was all

the company, and it left nobody out except the hotel-keeper, who was his own barman and billiard-marker, and the three sandalwood traders who were too busy drinking up the price of their last cargo to attend to anything else. This was Sunday night, and by some odd convention an evening of special leisure — to a populace that was certainly not overworked on any day of the week.

Stephanie, pouring out coffee at the far end of the veranda, looked, as Léon Cruchet, the recruiter, said ecstatically, like a white cloud come down from heaven with an angel in the middle of it, in her tremendous ballooning gauzy dress, which quite filled up the basket chair she was sitting in, and boiled frothily over the sides. She wore the smallest possible waist (the schooner captain, who was married, said it was a bit too good to be true, in his opinion, but in our opinion, that was only because Stephanie didn't like him, and always poured out his coffee last). When she got up to rustle back through the dining-room to her bedroom, as she generally did very early in the evening, you could hear her monstrously high heels go click-click on the boards, like the sound of a wood-pecker on a tree. We thought it all charming. We would have thought it charming if she had worn a tower on her head, like the ladies of the eighteenth century, or chained her feet to her knees, like the fashionable folk of the Middle Ages. She represented the whole world of white women to those few solitary men of Port Moresby, who had all of them wives or sweethearts or sisters with white skins and straight hair, somewhere a

long way away, and who, all of them, missed those other halves very much more than they would have thought possible, while they had them.

As for me . . . But I was telling about Worboise and his yarn.

". . . a native called Adilawa, a better fellow you couldn't wish to see; he was six foot two in his bare feet if you counted his hair; he was hereditary head-boiler to his tribe. . . ."

"Hereditary what?" gasped Stephanie: but Worboise bumbled on, stopless and resistless —

". . . and every one he boiled they'd give him its tortoise shell earrings now Adilawa he'd a reel liking for me and good-natured wasn't the word anything he could do he would was it yams or boys to carry for us or a bit of dog's meat, not bad either when your cartridges are out and they think the world of it themselves next to a roast of the forearm well Governor Hartley he had me arrested for a bit of a spree at Dinner Island the man being taken down to Sydney by a mission boat to have his ribs fixed up and as it wasn't convenient to jail a white man five pounds says he and you may think yourself lucky all the same as fifty to me being dead broke just then now Adilawa he walks into court which was the deck of the Government schooner and says he'll pay for his white man and it was nearer ten pounds of tortoise shell than five that he had in his string bag and Burns' Philp's trader he bought it cheap and I never forgot it on Adilawa though says he like a reel gentleman don't you worry for the boys they'll buy it all

up as like as not most of it'll come back to me in the way of business later on they're reel nice fellows if you can get the right way of them another time. . . ."

"Worboise! Have a whisky?" . . . His Excellency had been long enough in Port Moresby by now to know how best the tide of pioneer eloquence might be stemmed.

"I thank Your Excellency," said Worboise with sudden formality, getting up to take the glass, and plainly displaying one orange sock and one red, drooping mournfully over the string lacing of his boots.

Stephanie, prettily posed in the midst of her white cloud, fixed two blue eyes upon him, and asked —

"And Adilawa — is he dead?" evidently for the sake of saying something polite.

Worboise lifted his flat fishlike eyes over the rim of his glass, set it down, still staring immovably at Stephanie, and — whistled.

A sound like a dog awaking was heard from under the house, and immediately after, a large brown man bounded up the steps of the veranda. He had an incredibly tall mop of hair, circled by a halo of cassowary feathers: a pencil of orange shell was thrust through his nose: he had a bear's tusk slung locketwise on his chest, and wore a hornbill beak set in a fiber armlet. The rest of his costume consisted of a "jury-rigged" kilt of some checked cotton stuff, which I conjectured, by Stephanie's instantly suppressed look of horror, to be one of the Government House kitchen dusters.

Worboise pointed a dark-nailed thumb at the apparition.

"That's him, and the best cook-boy in the Territory," he said with feeling.

"Naturally," chuckled the Governor, who seemed to be enjoying himself.

Stephanie's vocabulary appeared to fail her altogether for a minute, and then —

"Is he a Christian?" she asked a little primly.

"Christian! Didn't I say he could COOK?"

". . . Can she cook collops?" quoted the Governor reminiscently. "Stephanie, my dear, you've had a long day — don't you think you must be tired?"

I have described this evening, not because it was remarkable in any way, but because it was a fair sample of a good many others. I think I had been to Government House some four or five times about then. His Excellency had been kind enough to give me a general invitation, and to repeat it, subsequently. It seemed that he looked on me as useful source of information about the country, and wanted to draw me out on the subject of my various experiences. So far, I don't think he had got very much. I understood His Excellency's methods of making people talk by this time, and did not like them greatly. It displeased me to see my "mates" of the Port, one after another, turning their minds inside out for the diversion, information, or what not, of Captain Hammond, unconsciously led on by the "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal" of his easy chatter, and never noticing the

stony gray eye that kept such sharp and unflinching watch, above the talkative mouth. When he had enough of any man, he could cut him short with scant ceremony, and turn the conversation to something else. I think I took a malicious pleasure in circumventing the queries which he put to me about the tribes of the interior, the lie of mountains and rivers, and so forth; but the truth was that I did not like him. The old grudge of the merchant sailor against the Royal Navy may have had something to do with it: Captain Hammond's evident conviction that he had a right to command any information, or indeed anything else, that I might possess, had rather more: but strongest of all, in the elements of my growing dislike for our Governor, was the knowledge that he considered me, socially, as far removed from equality with himself and Stephanie, as his own little Cockney valet. I had almost forgotten that such things as class distinctions existed, living as I had done, for the most part among those who were accustomed to rank men by nothing smaller than character. But now that the lines of social division were thus set up as a fence in front of me, I could not help remembering that any advantages attaching to the possession of birth and education were mine as much as Captain Hammond's: and certain small slights to which I was subject about this time began to rankle.

It was all exceedingly foolish, of course. Why should I, who years and years ago had thrown up my hand in that idiotic game called Society, and resigned all claim to its pasteboard prizes, grizzle because Caro-

lan, the R. M., was constantly dining at Government House, whereas I had not had, and was not likely to have, a chance to break bread under its roof? Why should I smart every time I met Captain Hammond in the township, and was greeted with a curt nod — the R. M. being sure to receive a smile, a lift of the hat, and probably a word or two as well? Why, in the name of common sense, should I feel injured because Carolan got his clothes from Bond Street, and spoke with the exquisite finish of accent that marks the man who has associated with none but the cultured classes? Why should I bristle like a hedgehog when the young Resident Magistrate, evidently wanting to make up for his superior's scant cordiality, drew his chair up to mine of an evening, and began to talk to me about trade-winds, and copra, and other subjects carefully and kindly selected to suit my presumably limited type of mind? Well — perhaps I was beginning to guess why. But I don't know that that made matters any better.

And what about the Governor's daughter?

The visions that had broken my sleep, away in the Owen Stanley Range, troubled me not at all, under the tin roof of Worboise's modest shanty. I ate my meals as usual, and Garia, I dare say, found me an easy master. I had business in Port Moresby just then — only the disposal of my bird skins, but it took some time. Afterwards — by-and-by, I did not exactly specify when — I meant to make a second trip into the interior, and get all that I could get of the gold I had found, before the news of the discovery leaked out, as

it was sure to do, sometime. There was no risk of that at present, however — the district was totally unknown to whites, and the idea of prospecting in that direction had never so much as occurred to anyone.

In the meantime —

Well, in the meantime, I had spent several evenings at Government House, with the rest of the proletariat, seen Stephanie pouring out coffee, and told her that I took a little sugar, and no milk. Also, I had been introduced to her, with a batch of half-a-dozen others, and received the seventh part of a pretty little bow and smile. But not a word had I spoken to her, in the way of ordinary conversation. In spite of His Excellency's condescension, nothing could be clearer than the fact that his daughter, socially speaking, was not for us.

It always happened that the chairs were arranged in such a way that no one could sit near Stephanie, unless he had the nerve (which nobody had) to pick up his own chair, and carry it right past the Governor, down half the length of the veranda. Carolan, it is true, often occupied that favored place, but he was usually planted there when we arrived, having already dined at the house. Besides, Carolan was inside the fence, outside of which we others strained and stared. He used to take a pleasure, I thought, in showing off his intimacy: he talked in low tones, and tried to make Stephanie laugh at private jokes — a thing she was much too well-mannered to do — and he used to hand her cups and jugs as often as he could, taking such care of the china that he never let it go until his long

brown fingers had safely met her little white ones, on handle or edge. . . . I used to wish, sometimes, that I had the chance of showing Carolan a trick of my own about squeezing hands: one that nobody has ever wanted to be shown twice. . . .

It was a curious thing, that in spite of all Carolan's attentions, and in spite of the demands made on her by the claims of hospitality, and in spite of the fact that she never seemed to look at me, Stephanie certainly heard everything I said to anybody on the veranda. How did I know? I can't say. But I did know. Her eyelashes, or her head, or something in the way she smiled, told me every now and then — I can't explain how. I'm afraid I talked at her, when I did talk, which was not very often. It was fascinating beyond anything that I can tell, to see how that swallow-swift mind of hers followed me from point to point — how quickly and certainly she caught any allusion or idea that passed over the heads of the others — how, all unconsciously, she signified assent with the fleeting shadow of a smile, or showed her delicate disapproval by the compression of that flower-petal lip. . . .

. . . In love with her? No, I was not. Interested, fascinated even, if you like, but as to love. . . . Why, what an airy fleeting spirit of flower and fire it was! Who could picture such a creature as a wife, a mother? I was horribly afraid of her marrying Carolan, and yet I didn't think she would. Her very flirtation with him — for she did flirt, openly and unashamed — was more like a child playing at

"grown-ups" than a woman venturing on that most perilous of all games of chance, where hearts are laid for stakes upon the table. Carolan's stakes might be on the table, indeed, but if she were not playing with counters, I was much in error.

Had she anything but counters to play with? That was assuredly none of my business: so it interested me. I tried to read her face more than once — I am one of those who believe that a woman's face, and indeed all of her, expresses her heart in characters clear enough to tell many a secret, if one can but read them. But the handwriting of physique was hard to spell, in Stephanie's case. She had not the slit small mouth, the thin eyelid, the hard hand, of the woman too cold for love: nor was she, in spite of her delicate make, of the swan-throated, dove-eyed, reed-voiced type that can love nought lower than heaven. No, after all, aërial creature though she was, there was something about Stephanie a little warmer, a little nearer, than angels and fairies. . . . I think that Herrick must have known her great-great-great-great-grandmother — an ancestress very like her charming descendant-to-be — when he wrote that immortal description of a dainty maiden —

> "Have you seen but a white lily blow,
> Before rude hands have touched it?
> Have you seen the fall of the snow,
> Before the soil hath smutched it?
> Have you felt the wool of the beaver,
> Or stroked the swansdown over,

Or tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!"

I don't seem to be getting on with my story. But it is amazing how long that comparatively short period of evening visits seems to have lasted, before the event occurred that put a new face on things in general. For years and years, I seemed to have been tramping out from Port Moresby in the cool of the evening, carrying a hurricane lantern, when there was no moon, because of the snakes and crocodiles, in the big black mangrove swamp — making quick time across the flat on the other side, where the mosquitoes came out of the grass, and tore you like wolves — breasting the hill that led to Government House, and seeing, at last, the orange glow of the lights, and the scattered forms in the chairs, and the cloud of white drapery at the coffee-table, and the half-naked boys handing cups, just as usual — feeling myself, just as usual, amazingly out of breath when I reached the steps — I, who could beat my own mountain boys on a steep rise in the eleven thousand foot ranges, where the air grows thin, and knees begin to tremble, and lungs seem made of lead — I seemed, as I say, to have been doing all this for years, and yet it was scarce six weeks since I had come back to port, and this was, after all, but the fifth time I had called, when Carolan, of all people on earth, threw the match into the tow at last.

It came about like this. I was sitting half in the shadow of a big pot of palms, listening, more or less, to His Excellency holding forth with babbling fluency,

upon the merits of different kinds of food for fowls. Worboise was sleeping, all spilled out over his hammock chair: luckily, he did not snore. Léon Cruchet, who was loyal down to the tips of his cockroach-eaten shoes, was trying, in a shocked and surreptitious manner, to wake him up. Two Samarai traders were smoking stick tobacco (the Governor never shared his cigars), and staring out to sea. Carolan, listening with half-an-ear, devoted the rest to Stephanie, whom he was supplying with crystallized sugar flowers out of a gilt French box — evidently a present.

"Try a violet," he said. . . . "No, sir, I would certainly not leave the meat bones in the food. I know it's done, but . . . The roses are almost the best, Miss Hammond. You haven't tried the orange-blossom yet, have you — it's the *very* best. Let me pick you out one," with a look that was meant to say a great deal.

"I think," said Stephanie coolly, "it's rather two sweet to eat."

"Don't eat it, then — take a piece — to dream on — won't you?"

"What will it make me dream of?" demanded the girl, with a face of such childlike candor that one could see she meant mischief. "There are things"— looking rather too pointedly at her neighbor, "that would wake one up crying for Nurse and the candle!"

"I don't mean things, I mean people," replied Carolan, who was nothing if not literal. "Don't you ever dream of — people?"

For a moment I felt enraged with Carolan's atti-

tude, even more than his words. He seemed to have the fine contempt for my presence and the presence of the traders, that a certain section of society has for its servants, when discussing affairs that ought to be private. We were evidently "things," rather than people, to him. But I had hardly time to feel the smart, for, in answer to his banal question, Stephanie . . .

I can hardly write it even now without emotion — it meant so much to me — has meant and will mean so much, through all my journey this side of the grave. Diana's moon-ray, falling on Endymion in the grove, can scarce have filled the common herdsman's heart with such a flood of wonder and delight as that which broke overwhelmingly on me in that moment — on me, the landless, moneyless, characterless, godless wanderer — when Stephanie looked at me and blushed.

It was only for a moment, and I am very sure that no one else saw it. Now, if anyone else had seen it, could he have guessed what a special significance it bore . . .

No one but myself knew of those weeks in the Owen Stanley Range when Stephanie's wandering wraith had kept me from sleeping, night after night, and by its strange vividness and aliveness had set me wondering, often enough, if there were indeed "more things in heaven and earth" than had hitherto been dreamed of in my philosophy. . . .

Were there? Was this a proof? In the name of all that was wonderful and delightful and impossible, *did she know?*

From my shadowed corner under the palm, I saw the quick blush fade as swiftly as it had come, and give way to waxen white — the flying, involuntary glance bury itself in the ground. With consummate grace, she took up the broken thread of her conversation, and wound it on so easily and smoothly, that no one, save myself, could have noted the gap. She smiled, she flirted, she played with her fan. But all the time the waxen paleness remained, and the little fingers, when they closed on the fan-sticks, shut so tight that the knuckles shone out like ivory.

She was afraid. She was afraid of me. She was afraid, in all the snowy little soul of her, that I should guess . . .

What?

The answer to that broke like a fanfare of golden trumpets into my mind. The whole world was singing, beating, shouting out the truth. The dim veranda seemed ablaze with light — with the light that never was on sea or land: the light that shines but once on any life, and never at all on some. And up to meet that never-hoped-for splendor sprang the hidden fire that had burned unknown so long, under dead wet leaves of utter hopelessness: under white cold ashes of forgotten sins: under beating rains of loneliness and pain — alive all the time, and burning upward to the day. I loved Stephanie.

Yes, you had reason to be afraid, little white soul trembling in the dawn of an unknown light. I knew the stainless secret that you would have given your life to hide: Father and friends and recognized lover

might do what they would — the Cerberus that guards the gateway between the under and the upper worlds of society might howl his worst — common sense and common prudence, and providence for the future, and settlements and dowries and all the wretched crew of "social wants that sin against the strength of youth," might shriek like a pack of wolves at our heels — they were all of no more account than a swarm of buzzing flies: and like a swarm of flies they would be swept aside, when they crossed the path of the strongest thing in all the world — the thing that makes the world itself go round — love. . . .

And all the time, His Excellency's excellent voice kept burbling on — it had only got one or two sentences further on while the stars were changing in their courses, and the world turning upside down, for Stephanie and for me. You might put as much greenstuff as you could get into the food-boiler, I was told: it would do the birds no harm: and you were safe — quite safe — with potatoes at any time. A friend of his had got an excellent recipe for artificial food in the *Poultry Record,* and reported astonishing results in eggs: but he (the Governor) considered the *Poultry Record* a most unreliable rag, and he would never be astonished to hear of heavy losses in Lord Vancouver's farms — had he mentioned that his friend was that well-known agricultural Marquis?

"Quite seldom," I said gravely. Léon Cruchet looked at me with round eyes of horror, but the Governor was absorbed in his subject, and flowed serenely on. Then a brilliant idea occurred to me: my mind

was racing like a screw out of water, and I seemed to be able to think at thrice the usual pace —

"Do you know *Fur and Feather,* your Excellency?" I asked.

"No — is it a good paper?"

"There is nothing in the least like it," I declared, solemnly. This was quite true, since no such paper ever existed.

"Where is it published?" asked the Governor with interest.

This was my moment. I reached for a pencil and memorandum pad that I had noted on the table, wrote on a blank leaf —"Messrs. Lloyd Jones, Ltd., 49 Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, E. C."— a sufficiently convincing address for a pure impromptu of the minute — and handed the leaf to Captain Hammond. In the moment that he was occupied reading it, I whipped out another leaf and penciled a single line on it.

This was what I wrote — my sailor's memory for poetry, and the sight of a gayly bound volume on the center table, together prompting me —

"Matthew Arnold: Sonnets —'Longing' 1-6."

Then I pinched the paper into a tiny wad, and hid it in my hand.

The Governor looked up from the slip I had given him.

"Thanks — it might be useful. I'll send for a sample copy if I remember," he said. And — the subject of the poultry-yard being for once exhausted — he turned to Léon Cruchet, who was all of a grin at His Excellency's affability, and began drawing him about

certain alleged cases of blackbirding reported from the East Cape country.

Now was my time. His Excellency had settled down to business, and was trying, in quite a genial manner, to make the flattered Cruchet incriminate his partner. For the moment, he was fully occupied; and Fortune favors the brave in love as in war. This was assuredly love — I had known it for quite five minutes. If utter hopelessness had made me as diffident as a girl hitherto, there was nothing of the girl about me now, and I did not intend it to be very long before Stephanie should know as much. . . . The passion-flower blooms swiftly, in the countries of the sun, and your sea-gypsy with the salt drop in his blood is the last of all men to let that blossom of blossoms linger on the stem. . . .

I rose to say good-night, got a curt nod from the Governor (he seemed to be just growing hot on the scent of a kidnaped crow), and received the usual condescending smile and shake-hands from Carolan, who came down the veranda to meet me. It had not happened hitherto that Stephanie had shaken hands with the guests, at their departure. Things always fell out — not by accident, I am sure — so that she was right at the other end of the veranda about leave-taking time, and no one seemed to have courage to cross the invisible line of demarcation, and go right up to her. I crossed it to-night, however, once and for always. I walked down the full length of those echoing boards — and really, it needed all the courage I had: — went up to the little coffee-table, and shook

hands as I said "Good-night," just as if I had done so every time I had taken my leave. And in the course of the shake-hands, a minute wad of paper passed from my fingers to Stephanie's.

She never turned a hair. I had hoped she would not, and gambled on the chance. A girl as pretty as Stephanie, I guessed, is not making her first acquaintance with smuggled notes at one-and-twenty — her age, as I had lately learned it. She had perfect command of herself now, and did not flutter an eyelid, or change color a shade, as she smiled her little formal good-night. Worboise and the Captain and Cruchet — the latter much to His Excellency's disgust, I have no doubt — all got up at once to go, when I did, like a flock of sheep following their leader, and still more like sheep, they followed me up to something that they never would have faced alone — the Governor's daughter, no less.

I had not calculated on that turn of affairs, nor on all the three shaking hands with Stephanie, as I had done — evidently thinking that we had all been guilty of an unpardonable solecism in neglecting the ceremony hitherto. I must own that my blood almost ran cold for a minute. But I need not have feared for Stephanie. Without any hurry or confusion, her slim right hand with its sparkling rings glided across the left hand, almost imperceptibly, and then stretched itself out — empty.

The guests shook hands solemnly, and departed. Captain Hammond looked on with a wooden face: you could not tell what he thought. The last I saw

of Stephanie, as I went down the hill into the darkness, was a vision of a still white figure on the steps, haloed by the glow of the lamp from the house. . . . It made me think of saints I had seen in lighted shrines along the midnight way, when I was tramping through golden Andalusia, long and long ago. . . . The poets were all abroad in my brain that evening. . . .

"So high, so far, and so apart" . . . I thought, looking back at my Madonna in her shrine. . . . And yet, dear saint, I knew well that it would not be very long before you were shut into your little moonlit room with Matthew Arnold for company, breathlessly turning over the leaves till you came upon the sonnet, and then catching your breath with indignation, and amazement, and . . . Oh, yes, I hoped with something else as well — when you came upon the message that I had been audacious enough to send you —

> "Come to me in my dreams, and then
> By day I shall be well again,
> For then the night will more than pay
> The hopeless longing of the day.
>
> "Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,
> A messenger from radiant climes . . ."

But for the next two lines I had no use —

> "And smile on thy new world, and be
> As kind to all the rest as me."

CHAPTER VIII

THE state of mind I went home in that night need not be described to anyone who, like myself, has seen the moon drop out of heaven into his hands because he cried for it — and it certainly could not be described to anyone who has not. I do not say that I had had no hope at all of ever finding favor in my lady's eyes, but at best, it was a mere "If only!" sighed from the bottom of the heart in lonely hours, and generally coupled to the pleasing fiction which I had upheld so long — that I wasn't in love with her, really.

You see, there are so many "if-onlys" in life, little hard buds that do not look as if they were ever meant to blow, and never do blow, generally speaking. "If only"— one were a millionaire, or a President, instead of a bank clerk. . . . "If only" one could live a hundred years. . . . "If only" the dead could come back to us from beneath the grass-grown sod, on which the rains of many years have beaten down. . . . "If only" the stars would stand still in their courses for us, and the sun pause in the heavens, and the world swing round from its orbit, to bring us our heart's desire. . . .

"If only"— the very words are a sigh of hopelessness. And yet, "If only" does come true — at times.

Paupers do wake up to find themselves richer than princes. Plowmen do rise to sit on thrones. The sickly lad outlives his century. Those counted dead come back to life and love. The stars drop down from heaven into our lap for playthings — sometimes.

I had not touched intoxicants that day, and I drank little at any time, yet I was drunk that night, if ever a man in this world was drunk — with sheer delight.

It seems absurd, on the face of it, that I should have been so certain this peerless creature was beginning to care for me, on evidence so slight, or that I should not have stopped to consider what it could mean or where it could all lead to, if she did. But "Credo quia impossibile" was my creed that night, and I held to it triumphantly. As to consequences — I didn't think, or argue, or plan: I just meant to marry her — that was all.

I don't know to this day what Worboise talked about all the way back, but as I dare say he did not know himself, that matters little. We turned in shortly after getting back to the little tin shanty on the beach. I need scarcely say I did not close an eye all night.

Naturally enough, the chief desire in my mind next day was, somehow or other, to maneuver an interview with Stephanie: although how it was to be done, I did not see for the moment. She had given up riding by herself, owing no doubt to a recent report of tribal disturbances in the Astrolabe, and now-a-days, the chestnut mare, Daisy, never cantered along the hill

track, or over the flat, without His Excellency's big bay, or Carolan's smart little pony close at hand. She did not go out walking, as far as I knew: and of course, private conversation on the Government House veranda was an impossibility.

I can't say I felt quite so confident or as well pleased this morning. The inevitable reaction was getting in its work, and I began to wonder was it just possible that I had been making the most colossal fool on record of myself. After all, what justification had I for behavior that, in the uncompromising glare of the midday sun, seemed next to unpardonable?

Too restless to stay in the house, or endure Worboise's endless talking, I wandered out in the full heat of the day, and tramped I do not know how many miles on the native track that leads past the Mission grounds, towards the Laleki River. There had been drought for a good many weeks, and the country was baked to a cinder. Through the shadeless gray-green eucalyptus, through the melancholy mop-heads of the pandanus, through the dust vanes of the palms, the sun struck straight and clear upon the crumbling earth, from a sky as hard and blue as a bit of china. The flat sapphire-colored sea, spread out between its circling headlands, looked as if you might turn the blade of an ax on its surface. You could feel the heat smacking you on the back, and slapping you in the face, and in the hollows of the hills, where the air was shut away, you gasped as if you were drowning. A hard, brassy, heartless, wicked kind of a day: a day when the country flaunted all its worst points in your

face, and threatened you as plainly as if it had shaken a spear at you, after the manner of its sons. . . . Not a day, assuredly, to put heart into a man who was beginning to want it.

I don't know how far I had gone, or when I had turned, but it was late in the afternoon when I found myself close to the Mission again, within a few minutes of Government House. The sun, as it wore down to the west, had lost not a whit of its power, and the glare from the sea was almost insupportable. The leathernecks clattered and shouted in the cocoanuts like a ward of lunatics let loose. I hated them, and I hated the Australian crows that were dodging in and out of the mango boughs, screaming a long-drawn, mocking, insulting "Ha-ha-ha!" It seemed to me that there was nothing tolerable on the island-continent of New Guinea that afternoon — myself least of all.

There is nothing sportsmanlike about Nature. When you are down, she has a nasty way of kicking you. She kicked me that afternoon — not only kicked me, but danced on me. At least, that was how I felt when I suddenly met Stephanie and her father coming out of the Mission grounds, and received, from one, the usual curt official nod, from the other —

Well, the cut direct — given as a London lady can give it, without actual rudeness — just a bow with the eyelashes, a slight change in the set of the lip — the mere ghost of a recognition, that said as plainly as possible —" I do not actually cut you, because I am too polite, but . . ."

I stood there in the sun-parched grass, and wished I was dead.

When I got back to the shanty, a little later, I found some relief in kicking Garia off the veranda, where he was chewing and spitting betel nut with hideous industry.

"You brute," I said, adding a strong expression or two, "what do you mean by sitting there? Go off to the cook-house."

Garia took me in with his bulging crab-eyes, and seemed to decide that I was not too dangerous to face out, this time.

"Me wantum talk along Taubada," he pleaded, hastily shoving a quid into his cheek.

"Go and be hanged," was all the reply he got.

My black warrior began cramming his knuckles into his eyes.

"Wantum talk," he sniffed. "Wantum one girl."

"So do your betters, confound you," said I, glaring out to sea with my arms folded, and probably looking like a cheap caricature of Napoleon crossing the Alps.

Garia, oddly enough, seemed to find something encouraging in my demeanor, for he continued, keeping a cautious eye fixed on me, but showing off his tears to full advantage.

"Wantum marry one girl." (Sniff.)

"Where's your wife, you Brigham Young?"

"He no young, he flenty old, flenty fight, flenty talk, no work. I been frow him away. Wantum marry one girl, Taubada." He wept again.

"Garia, you're scandalous in the last degree: one

would think you belonged to the best set of London society. What do you want?"

"Wantum one—"

"You said that before. What you want alonga me?"

The crocodile tears dried up. Garia straightened himself, wiped his eyes, and came down to business.

"Me wantum seventeen shilling, sixpence, buy five pound tobacco 'long store."

"That's the price of your happiness, is it?"

"Yessir. Me gettum flenty bead, toya (armshell), sapi-sapi (shell money). Me get tobacco. Mother belong girl he talk bad along me, he tell, me no good. Suppose me give five pound tobacco along that mother, he talk good, he giving girl. Taubada, you give me tobacco."

His face was as plaintiff as a child's, his big brown chest, all shining with the cocoanut oil he had rubbed on to make himself beautiful in his lady's eyes, heaved up and down with his anxiety of soul. He knew very well indeed that his wages were anticipated already for a month ahead, and it was long odds this additional draft on the future would not be honored. The tears were already in his eyes.

"Me wantum too much that girl," he sniffed.

Utterly unconscious of the sport the gods of chance were having with me that day, I clinched my own fate as well as his with my reply.

"I suppose one poor devil may as well be happy, if another can't. There!" and I threw a sovereign across the veranda.

Garia's face lit up as he caught it, but, with Papuan brusqueness, he offered no thanks, turning off in the direction of the township and the store, without a word.

"Here, you ungrateful beggar, say thank-you!" I called.

"Thank you, Taubada," he said, hanging on one reluctant foot.

"Whose girl is she — what mother belong that girl?" I asked, feeling that I had some right to know what my money was going to buy.

"Girl belong Guarumé."

"Guarumé! There are two Guarumés that I know of. What's the girl's own name?"

"Tararua, Taubada. He call Tararua," explained Garia, fidgeting like a small boy with a sixpence in his pocket, and a tart-shop round the corner.

"Where she stop?"

This last was shouted down the track, for Garia had taken to his heels, and was off hot-foot for the store. Most reluctantly he checked for a minute, called out —

"He stop Govamen' House, along Misi Sefania!" and stood champing his bit in the pathway.

I was struck dumb for a moment.

"Taubada, I go?" called the lovelorn suitor.

"Go!" I answered, and he was away like a bandicoot.

It was evening now, and the sun was low down in the west — a cloudy evening, after the heat of the

day, and threatening storm. But for me, the sun had only that moment risen.

Stephanie's maid and my cook-boy enamored of each other, married, living together in the village! (for all our servants, in Port Moresby, went out only by the day). Why, a five-act comedy could not have produced a neater, more convenient, more entirely delightful coincidence. My spirits went up again with a jump. If charity is a virtue, virtue was certainly not going to be its own reward, in this instance.

It was quite a new cook-boy who turned up next morning. Garia was a good-looking fellow in any case, big for a Papuan, well-made, and finely muscled; and he did not neglect the business of personal adornment, as a rule. But his toilet to-day surpassed any previous efforts in that direction. He had a bird of paradise tail on each side of his head, a half-circle of scarlet hibiscus flowers above his forehead, and another of green parrot plumes behind. An aigrette of combined flower and feather, two feet high, nodded from the center of the enormous bush into which he had teased his hair: his ears were loaded with strings of shell money, and his elaborate harness of beads, teeth, shells, and mother-of-pearl, rattled, as he walked, like the pebbles on a stony beach when the tide is coming in.

"Hallo, Garia, you're got up to kill!" I called out. "Guarumé she been talk good alonga you, eh?"

"Guarumé she talk good. I go talk along girl to-day. Taubada, by-an'-by you let me go?" he asked.

Worboise was out: I had the house to myself. I beckoned Garia up on to the veranda.

"Look here," I said. "Is the girl willing to marry you?"

"I think she wantum all right by-an'-by, suppose I giving her flenty bead, calico, seegar," averred the lover.

"Suppose you give her something big, would she marry you straight off — to-day?"

"I no got somesings big," lamented Garia, turning the plaintive stop on again, and watching me with a magpie eye.

"How much she want, marry you to-day?"

Garia drew a big breath, and appeared to reflect.

"I think," he said, letting out all the wind in his chest with one gasp, to express the magnitude of his idea —"I think, she marry me suppose I giving her one big pig."

This was no joke, for the current value in trade of a big pig was not less than five pounds. However, I was not in a state of mind to count trifles. The sooner that marriage took place, the better for me.

"You can have a day off and go and get one," I said. "I'll pay for it. Bring the girl up here to-morrow, and let's see whether you have got good value. I hope you've picked a decent looking one, at least."

I dismissed him with a lordly wave of the hand, and sat down on the step of the veranda to muse and dream on my own account. The lotus-eating mood was on me that morning: I did not feel like working, or thinking, or doing anything but lounging here by

the sea, listening lazily to the lazy drone of the coral-reef, and

"Falling asleep in a half dream . . .
To watch the ripples crisping on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray. . . ."

. . . Confound the boy!

"Taubada," said a monotonous voice at my elbow.

It is not necessary, I suppose, to write down what I replied. I had thought him half way to the village by this time — the simple savage, bent on prosecuting his simple love affair, and innocent as a baby of all that was in my mind. Why couldn't he hurry up and leave me to my dreams?

"Taubada," remarked the bridegroom, cramming a chew of betel nut into his cheek —"Tararua, she say —"

"Well? What did she say? Hurry up and get off."

"Tararua, she say Misi Sefania, she been cly all night."

He was gone this time — gone like a lizard when you hit at it with a stick. His paradise plumes were nodding and streaming in the sunlight, a long way down the track — quite a hundred yards from the spot where I was sitting on the veranda, petrified.

The simple savage, indeed!

"Worboise, I'm going to Government House," said I, some hours later.

We had had our supper, excellently cooked by Adilawa, the ex-head-boiler, and were smoking outside.

The night was outrageously warm, with a low plum-colored sky, hanging heavily over a dead black sea. Our sleeves clung wet with perspiration upon our arms: we had taken off ties, unfastened shirts, kicked off shoes, but coolness was not to be found, that night, upon the length and breadth of New Guinea.

"Now look here, boy," said Worboise, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and turning a reproachful gaze on me —"do you think this is the sort of night to tramp two miles out and home?"

He always called me "boy"— not because I was one, at thirty years of age, but because — I suppose — he was misguided enough to have some sort of a fancy for me, in spite of my being, like Carlyle, "gey ill to live wi'," at times.

"Yes, I do," I said selfishly, knowing that the old fellow was too good-natured to refuse, and too sociable to let me go alone. "You won't feel the heat half so much if you get up and stir about."

"Well, boy, youth will be served," said my companion, getting up heavily. "You won't want me to put on a collar?" with a reproachful, fishlike gaze.

"No, no!" I said hastily. "I shall wear one myself — at least, I'll take it in my pocket, and put it on after the flat — but you're all right with a tie."

Worboise, nodding his head sadly, went into the house to adorn himself, and shortly afterwards emerged ready for the road.

Blessings on his dear old stupidity! He never asked a question, or saw anything that you didn't want him to see, or remarked on your dress, or demeanor,

or indeed, on "anything that was yours." He never *wanted to know,* in short. Despite his appalling talkativeness, he was not one of the worst to get on with. And I really think the Governor liked his visits and himself as well as he liked anyone — certainly better than he liked mine, or me.

Certainly, my welcome that night was a good deal cooler than the weather. I do not know what His Excellency had seen or guessed — come to that, there had really been nothing, so far, for him to see — but I had scarcely set foot on the veranda, before it became plain that my presence was not ardently desired. Captain Hammond greeted me in a wooden manner peculiar to himself, and immediately became absorbed in some small carpentry upon which he was at work, without another word. Stephanie had not made her appearance yet. Carolan was not there either. Worboise and I were left alone with the Governor, and His Excellency did not seem inclined to smooth away any awkwardness we might feel.

My good old chum weighed in at once with a detailed account of a head-hunting party in the Solomon Islands, in which he had been obliged to join, on penalty of leaving his own head behind him to decorate the local devil-temple. I must say there was rather too monotonous a flavor of cannibalism about Worboise's reminiscences, and it seemed as if His Excellency had had as much anthropophagical anecdote as he cared for, on the whole: for he cut brusquely into Worboise's yarn before long,— just as the head-hunters had set the narrator to gather Solamum Anthro-

pophagus for the flavoring of the pot, as a preventive of indigestion — and asked him did he ever lose his keys?

Worboise gasped at the sudden change of subject, and looked more fishlike than ever for a moment. He had scarcely time to get his bearings again, and start a fresh yarn about the time he lost the key of the box that had all his cartridges in it, just as a hundred New Hebrideans armed with Tower muskets were coming down on his schooner, before the Governor scattered the New Hebrideans, as he had scattered the Solomon Islanders, with a yawn and an interruption. He suffered extremely from the loss of keys by the boys, he informed Worboise (still leaving me out of the conversation) and he was making a key-box with a slit in the lid, to be kept locked, and to receive the various keys after the fashion of a charitable collection-box in a church. How they were to get out again I forget, for at this point my attention became diverted to certain mysterious noises from the back of the house, and I was dimly conscious, for the next few minutes, of a hard wooden voice proclaiming with countless capital I's, a great many general truths about keys and locking up, and staples and padlocks and letter locks and chains — all for the benefit of Worboise, who was listening in a dull hypnotic manner, and seemed to feel that somebody had taken something from him, somehow.

. . . What could it be? It sounded like the groans of someone being choked to death — someone fat and unwieldy, who made a heavy scuffling on the

earth, and fought hard but hopelessly for freedom. . . . There were voices, too — whispering, suppressed, excited voices, and feet that pattered and ran. . . . Native voices, native feet — except.

No, surely, it was not the voice of my lily maid that I caught for a moment, raising itself incautiously, and then subsiding — Stephanie's voice — in that galley, whatever it was?

Well, if not, it was certainly her French shoes that clicked hurriedly across the dining-room a minute after, and herself — slightly blown, if one may use the word of anyone so elegant — and just a little less exquisitely neat than usual — who appeared on the veranda, and billowed into a basket chair, after shaking hands with Worboise and myself very politely, and just as if she had never seen us before. I liked that, on the whole: she was overdoing things in a way that pleased me . . . if I said through experience, it would look vain, so I won't.

Dear lily-maid, she looked white enough this evening to suggest that Garia and Tararua between them had been telling the truth about her. . . . Crying all night! I could have killed myself, for being the cause of that — and again, could have killed the gossiping Garia, at the thought that perhaps I wasn't, after all!

She was astonishingly talkative and gay to-night — just a little more so than was natural, perhaps, but it was charming, nevertheless. She was quite witty with her father on the subject of the keys, and almost flirted with Worboise, and she stitched away with

lightning stitches at the bit of embroidery in her lap, and laughed at everything and nothing . . . and didn't look at me at all. As for me, I stared — boldly, and rudely, and all the time. I was getting tired of this business of stolen glances, which was not at all in accordance with my constitution.

If the Governor saw me, I did not care. A cat may look at a king, and an unlucky dog of a trader, at a queen, without asking for permission, any day.

Suddenly, through the far-off murmur of the sea, and the nearer murmur of pleasant conversation, broke a piercing yell from the immediate rear of the house, followed by a frantic scuffle, and a chorus of native shrieking and laughing.

"It's got away!" said Stephanie, half-rising from her chair.

"What has got away? what is the meaning of this?" demanded His Excellency, in a peculiarly Excellent manner. "May I ask, Stephanie, what possible connection you can have with the killing of pigs — which is apparently the cause of the agitation outside — and what reason anyone can have for killing or bringing, pigs here at this time of night?"

Most girls would have wilted away under the Governor's tone, but Stephanie had something of Stephen's spirit in her, to all appearance, and she answered with perfect composure.

"It's Tararua's wedding, Papa. They aren't killing the pig — it's a present."

Obviously, Garia, having "found out a gift for his fair" had come up to present it in person. Stephanie's

words seemed to suggest that the gift had won the lady's heart.

"What were you doing out there?"

Stephanie drew a silken thread through her canvas, and inspected the effect.

"I? Oh, Tararua wanted me to see the presents: she has got quite a lot of things, beads and tobacco and so on, as well as the pig. I'm sorry it disturbed you, Papa: I was trying to make them keep quiet."

"Where does the marriage take place?" demanded the Governor. I could see that he was only following out his usual habit of inquiring into everybody's business on general principles, but I could also see that Stephanie was not quite easy.

"They're all going down to Hanuabada for the feast now," she said. "I don't think there will be much noise — just a little dancing."

The Governor drove his chisel into the wood.

"Who's she marrying?" he asked.

"A Motuan boy from the village." Stephanie had stopped embroidering, and was sitting with her hands folded up tight on her work.

"Wh —"

. . . It was an awful crash. The palm-stand was solidly made, but the great clay pot that held the plant burst like a shell on the floor, and scattered earth and roots and leaves over half the veranda. I was fulsomely apologetic; I abused my own clumsiness heartily: I groveled on the floor, helping the boys to clear up.

The incident lasted a good five minutes, and by the

time it was concluded with the departure of the depressed palm for re-potting, nobody was thinking about anything else.

. . . Or almost nobody. As I went back to my seat, Stephanie, screened by my passing figure, looked up at me and smiled a smile that said "Thank-you!" as plain as print.

So she knew — and she did not mind — and we were allies she and I, against her father!

"It marches," said I to myself, as I regained my seat.

. . . . . .

I said before, and I say again, that the Governor could have known nothing — could have seen nothing — nothing at all. But Providence had certainly furnished him with means of informing himself about other folks' affairs, in some occult manner special to himself. I did not know how much he comprehended, but I was sure that it was no small proportion of the truth, when I rose to say good-by that night.

Stephanie had been sent off to her room, on the grounds that she looked tired — which was true enough. I did not care to stay on after she had left, and rose to take my leave almost immediately.

"Good-night," said His Excellency, standing at the top of the steps and giving me a wooden hand. "I have been much interested in all you've told me about the country and so on: very good of you to take the trouble. You must call here after your next journey inland, and tell me all about it. I've been interested in meeting you, Mr. — a — Mr. Lynch — but you

really mustn't let me take up any more of your time. Good-by."

. . . Down the hill, out on to the dark flat, where the mosquitoes worried like dogs, through the black mangrove swamp where the crocodiles crept . . . for the last time. I had been turned out — civilly, amiably, but unmistakably, turned out.

Was it marching?

Good old Worboise had been up in the clouds as usual, and never heard a word. He told me, on the way home, about the cannibals of the Aird River country, and how they boil sticks of sage with their food, and about a Fly River tribe that eats corpses, provided they haven't died of a wasting disease that spoils the fat. I half heard him, and half not. I was thinking busily, and the burden of my thought was — What next?

. . . . . .

Reading all this over, here in cool blood, with time — aye, time and to spare — for quiet thinking, I have become conscious that some excuse for my conduct would be well in place. If I had one to offer, I would certainly add it to these scrawled and melancholy pages. But I have not. I did what was foolish when I married Kari the Papuan, and I suffered for it. I did what was both selfish and foolish, when I made love to snow-drop Stephanie, and not only I, but she, have suffered, and will suffer, for that. If I could excuse myself, I would, but what excuse is there, save that God, or the Devil, or it may be myself, made me one of those who never count the cost?

And yet,— perhaps there is an excuse after all; but it is hard to put it into words. Or rather, it is so easy to put it into words, that the words have lost all their force. What is it, to say —"I loved her, she loved me"? Every schoolgirl's manuscript "story" tied up with pink ribbon, and hidden in a bottom drawer, reeks with the phrase. Every ill deed done for lawless passion, since the days of David — every silly match of an impulsive pair who are likely as not to figure in the divorce courts before five years are out — is undertaken under the shield and justification of a feeling no nearer to most of those who call upon its name, than are the stars to earth. But still, the truth remains — though it takes the pen of a Petrarch, a Shelley, to tell it worthily and clearly, that "true love" is not as other love, and to win it in all honor and honesty, a man and a woman may pay all the price that the world can ask of them. It will be a heavy price: the Fates who hate true lovers, take care of that.

CHAPTER IX

I WAS caulking Worboise's ancient dinghy down on the beach next morning, when Garia appeared with the bride, eager for my opinion on his bargain. His finery of the preceding week was replaced by a plain cotton "rami" or kilt, and, like the heroine of an early Victorian novel, he wore, "but a single flower in his hair." Obviously, Garia was of those who do not believe in running after a 'bus when you have caught it.

Tararua, the bride, was handsome according to native ideas: her nose was flat, and she had a mouth like a frog, but she was a fine, upstanding, large-limbed girl, with big black eyes, and shining teeth not yet blackened by betel nut. Her demeanor was better suited to a funeral than a honeymoon, being solemn, sour, and unsmiling to the last degree: this, however, was merely dignity, and not meant to suggest dissatisfaction with her partner. I looked at her with a good deal of interest — it was strange to think of this brown-skinned, bush-headed creature, in her ballet-skirts of colored grass, attending on my dainty lady — waking her from her morning sleep, taking care of her pretty clothing and delicate toilet accessories, knowing or guessing at all her little secrets, as a woman, black, white or brown, will always know or guess at the heart of another. . . .

Coarse in essence as I knew the best of these savages to be, it seemed almost a sacrilege.

And then came the burning recollection of that other brown, half-naked girl, gentle and attractive enough to outward seeming, untamed daughter of cannibals at heart, who had been my own married wife, and whose successor, so please you, I was aiming to make out of Stephanie Hammond!

The insult of it! A widower, to most young girls, is less attractive than the bachelor who may at least be supposed to meet his ideal for the first time in her to whom he gives his name — but the widower of a black!

"I hope she'll never know," was the best I had to say for myself.

"Taubada, you like him?" asked Garia anxiously. He pushed the girl forward, turned her round like a doll, smacked her solid arms with his hand, and showed the thickness of her hair by a tug that would have made a white woman shriek. Tararua only stared at me with her glittering beady eyes, and kept her hands stiffly by her sides in the attitude of "Attention." She was evidently determined to exhibit the best of manners.

"Why, yes, Garia, I think you've made a satisfactory bargain," I said, dissembling my laughter. "She cost a good deal, but she seems to be a pretty fair article. Does she like you?"

"I no savvy," replied Garia contemptuously. Then, with a sudden eldritch cackle —"Flenty I make him

work by-'n'-by; he go 'long bush to-day, cut down tree for fire, carry water, carry wood, carry yam. Flenty he work, this my wife," exultantly.

"What about Misi Sefania? Won't she want Tararua?"

"Misi Sefania he tell Tararua he stop 'long village to-day. To-morrow, all the time, he going Govamen' House eight o'clock. Five o'clock I make him get up . . . quick, go work for me. Very good thing I getting wife. Taubada, by-'n'-by you getting some wife?"

"Perhaps, Garia."

"He work along you flenty?"

"No, you bet she won't. I work for her."

The bride's face gave signs of life at this, and her frog-mouth emitted a giggle.

"New Guinea way more better," said Garia cheerfully. His partner giggled again, and fixed me with a beady stare. She seemed to think the conversation irrelevant, and to be waiting for something else.

"Well, if you're going to send Tararua to the bush, you may as well come back to your work," I said.

Garia saluted (he had been in the Armed Native Constabulary) and went into the house, yelling an order to Tararua, in a martial tone, as he went. The bride, however, stood planted there, looking at me, and still giggling. She was certainly waiting for something.

"You want to talk along me?" I asked.

The giggles redoubled. Tararua bent her chin down on to her tattooed bosom, and looked up under her eyelashes.

"About Misi Sefania?"

"É!" came the reply, and forthwith the floodgates were loosed. A perfect river of pigeon-English poured out on me, mingled with cackles of the purest joy. Your New Guinea native is a born newsmonger, and Tararua's cup of gossip was full to-day. That she understood the purpose of her hurried marriage, however, and meant to live up to the situation, was as clear as daylight.

"Govana, he been talk strong along Misi Sefania," she rattled breathlessly. "Cook boy he telling me, Govana he talk Misi Sefania, blekfas' time to-day, he saying Misi Sefania look out along Misi Lineti (Lynch), Misi Lineti giving letter."

How in heaven . . . But I wanted to hear more.

"Misi Sefania, he talk along Govana, he says Govana tell dam lie (I recognized the native version here), he go along him room, shut door."

"Was she crying?" I asked.

"Laa-si!" said Tararua, using the emphatic Motuan negative, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "He no cly. He flenty wild along Govana. By-'n'-by Govana he go 'long Misi Sefania room, he say, he wanting some-sings, cook-boy no savvy what he want. Misi Sefania he say —'No, no, you resulting me, I no say nothing, you go to hell.'" (Native version obvious again.) "Govana he say —'All right, you stop, by-'n'-by you

talk.' He lockum door, he go out, Misi Sefania he stop."

This was news with a vengeance. How His Excellency had discovered the incident of the note, I could not guess: but it was exactly like him to ferret it out. It was clear that he had taxed Stephanie with favoring me, that she had denied it — as she had every right to do, considering the extremely small amount of encouragement she had really given — that she had taken refuge from further questioning in her room; that he had followed her, tried to extract some kind of information, or possibly some promise, from her, and failed, and locked her in, to meditate on her supposed sins! A heavy hand, indeed, to deal with my fragile, lonely little lady. What was she doing now? Crying? No, I would swear not. There was a blade of steel in that silken scabbard — Stephanie was Stephen's daughter, though her beauty could scarce be owing to him. What would come of war between such a pair — one hard, tyrannical, overbearing, the other fragile, yet firm, to be broken, perhaps, but never to be bent? . . . And I — I the cause!

I threw the bride a stick of tobacco, and told her to go. Then I went into the house, and sat down on the cane lounge, my head on my hands. My mind was spinning like a screw raised out of water: I could not think.

Old Worboise came out of the inner room, looking exactly like the Mad Hatter, with a large pannikin of eleven-o'clock tea in one hand, and a piece of bread,

extensively bitten, in the other. He sat down on the other end of the lounge, and looked at me, chewing solemnly.

"Boy, you'd better have it out," he said. (As if my distress were a tooth.) "You know I don't go to ask questions, not in an ordinary way. But this is beyond ordinary. Set up comfortable, and say it all."

I do not know that there was much comfort within range that day, but I sat up and told the whole story, leaving nothing out. And certainly at the end I felt better.

Worboise chewed industriously throughout the whole recitation, making no comment at all. When I had done, he swallowed his last morsel, emptied the pannikin, and set it down. I can see him now, sitting there in the warm dusk of the little iron house, with a hand on each knee, looking not towards me at all, but out through the fiery-white oblong of the doorway, on to the sand, and the palms, and the burning sea.

"Boy, it's a bad business," he said at last.

"Why?" I demanded hotly.

Worboise took up his tin pannikin again, looked in it as if to find an answer, and set it down.

"Because," he said, "because of — all this sort of thing, you know." (I could have sworn his mind still clung to the battered piece of tinware — in truth, none of the household appointments were of the best.) "It don't fit in, somehow."

"Well, I'm not a beggar," I said. "You know,

I've always worried out a good living ever since I came to the Territory, and I only wish I'd a quarter of the money I made and spent before that. I've as good prospects as any of these whipper-snapper Government officials — better, if it comes to that. Why, which of them could make two hundred in six weeks, as I did in the Astrolabe and the Owen Stanley, not long ago? And I've other irons in the fire that you'll hear all about by and by. Why, I'm one of the most successful men in New Guinea, take it all round. If I were to buy a schooner, and recruit for the Queensland plantations, or go back to the bêche-de-mer or the pearl shelling, I could make a little fortune in no time."

"Well, boy, you know I'm no swell myself, but I was reared in the Old Country, and I know their ways. And you was something of a swell yourself, when you was a nipper, so I believe. Now do you think New Guinea ways is ways for a swell to take to?"

"By God, I do," I said, getting up to my feet, "swell or no swell — if she loves me. If she does, she'd go to hell with me, and be happier there than in heaven without. If she doesn't, why, let her marry that lady's lapdog Carolan, and go home and go to tea-parties all the rest of her life — I don't want her. But, Worboise, she does. I'll swear it. I'm willing to allow that it's foolish of her to care for a rip like me, but seeing that she is foolish in that particular way — why, what's there in her different from the women who helped to make Australia forty years ago, that she shouldn't care to take the chances

they did? They were just her sort, many of them — and they came out from home with their men, and stuck to them through thick and thin — and I'd stake my life on it that if you could round up all that's left of that crowd, and all that's left of their sisters who stayed at home, and kept their nice complexions and their place in society — you'd find the Australian lot thought they'd made the best use of their lives. . . . And think of her people, who they were — Admiral Steve Hammond of Nelson's staff — Scott Hammond, who nearly did Speke out of the discovery of the sources of the Iile — Gilbert Hammond of the Crimea — and as for her father, he's the hardest case I ever met, but people do say the battle of Alexandria wouldn't have gone the way it did if he hadn't been there. Blood tells,— a girl with that ancestry wasn't meant to spend her life curling her hair for dinner-parties. And she's stood up to that old devil of a Governor as not one of his officers would have dared to do in a month of Sundays. And we're as much engaged as if I'd asked her twenty times, and seen her a hundred. We fell in love with each other the day I held her horse on the Laloki track, only we've both been fools enough not to know it — and — well, she's mine, Worboise, and I'll tell her so, and claim her, just as sure as there's a God in heaven."

"Boy, boy, boy!" old Worboise sighed, looking at me as I tramped up and down the room. "Boy, I seen many an 'asty one, but never one as 'asty as you. Pluck you have, and luck you have, and looks you have, such as women likes better on the whole

than the pop-eyed sort with a pretty mustarsh, but common sense you 'aven't, and not if one was to wash you out pannikin by pannikin till you was all washed down stream, one wouldn't find a color of it in you."

"Common sense!" I said. "The boast of everyone who isn't half alive! If one is to judge of it by the sort of folk who have got most of it, heaven save me from having any. But I never really knew what most people mean when they talk about it and I don't believe they know themselves."

"Some do, some do," answered old Worboise patiently, "but you've 'it the nail on the 'ead when you say you don't, boy. I'm not blamin' you, you was just made that way."

"Well, you who have so much," I said, rather more scornfully than was generous, "tell me what you think I ought to do."

"I won't go so far as that, but I'll tell you what I think you oughtn't to. I know you're fair jumpin' to be off to Government House, and tell His Excellency he don't know 'ow to manage his own family, and let the young lady out of her room, which she's like enough out of by now, anyways. But I wouldn't, boy, if I was you."

"Well, I've got to see her somehow," I declared.

"If you've as much sense as would lie 'eaped up on a thruppenny-bit, you'll wait till you've cooled off a bit. You see, boy, if a man goes to 'andle women or 'orses without he's cool, he's liable to get thrown. You wait till to-morrow, when that Tararua's back at her work, and don't you fret your insides out about

your girl being in a comfortable bedroom for a day, with 'er books and 'er work, regular meals and drinks. I'll lay you His Ex. is fair ashamed of himself by this time, and she'll be out for a ride this afternoon same as usual. You get up Paga Hill after dinner and see."

The strain and the fury seemed to have eased off by now: I was able to think, and I sat down again.

"I'll wait," I said. "Only till to-morrow, though. I expect things will have straightened out by then."

"You may take your davy of it. Now look-a-here, I see an alligator nest in the mangroves round the point, only the day before yesterday — two dozen eggs there was in it — and if they've taken to layin' about there, you and me would stand a good chance of pickin' one off. Suppose we takes the Winchesters out, and has a try."

. . . . . .

We spent half a day in the black sludge of the mangrove swamp, and got no more than a distant shot at a gray streak sliding into the water — missed, of course, for you can't hit an alligator through his armored tail — but I was rewarded for the tramp, for the big, coarse white eggs were beginning to hatch, and I came away with a baby alligator tied up in my handkerchief, a green-eyed, needle-toothed, wicked little thing no longer than my hand, absurdly harmless, and absurdly fierce. I put it in a kerosene tin full of water, and left it there while I climbed up the hill to look out for Stephanie and her horse. She came

late, but I saw her at last, riding towards the Mission, with Carolan and the Governor close behind.

So she was released! I felt I should sleep the better for the knowledge.

I sent the alligator to Stephanie that same evening, not by Tararua — I did not wish to advertise the bride's connection with my household — but by a hired boy. I had tied a blue ribbon round the ridiculous little creature's neck, and shut it up in a tea cannister. It was an odd love-gift, perhaps, but New Guinea is an odd country.

By nine o'clock the alligator was back in the cottage, with a very cool little note — "Miss Hammond is obliged to Mr. Lynch for his present, and regrets she cannot accept it."

But I threw the letter above my head, and caught it again and laughed. For, scribbled very hurriedly in pencil, on a corner of the sheet, was the one word —"Dictated."

When Garia went home a little later, he carried a note which was to be smuggled into Stephanie's room at once, by Tararua. It ran as follows —

"I shall be waiting under the big rubber tree at five A. M. Please give me a chance to explain and ask pardon. HUGH LYNCH."

. . . . . .

It was not five o'clock by a good ten minutes, when I turned up the grassy avenue from the sea next morning, and hastened to hide my white suit under the huge shadow grove of the rubber tree that stands

some way below Government House. Very shadowy indeed it was at that hour, for the sun was hardly risen, and only the tops of the hills stood as set in full day. Under the great Ficus, the ground was a brown raffle of withered leaves for hundreds of feet; no grass could grow beneath that dense dark shade. But every limb, as it shot forth from the colossal trunk, spanning incredible spaces of empty air with its unsupported length, was garlanded all over with fern and feathery creeper, and here and there a delicate pale orchid bloom — true Gardens of Armida in the sky. At the utmost ends of these giant branches, the smaller boughs swept down to touch the ground, enclosing within the magic circle of the tree a whole great world of silence, solitude and dark.

Here I waited, leaning against the enormous central trunk, and watching the vivid rays of the tropic dawn shoot arrow after arrow through the loopholes of the boughs, aiming, as they aimed all day, first low, then high, then low again, at that impregnable pillar of gloom in the heart of the forest sanctuary, and falling short, as they always fell. Beyond the palms, a little way off, the sea lipped the stones of the boat-house pier; the tide was coming in with scarce a ripple, but you could hear every whisper of salt water on stone and weed, in the breathless hush of the dawn. Strange creatures of the night were hurrying home: a giant lizard, as long as a man, ran by like a guilty thing, and buried itself in a copse of dew-wet spear-grass, some eight feet high — a brown wallaby, with hanging front paws and silly sheep-like face, bounded

through the undergrowth outside the tree, in long crashing leaps, and vanished almost before I had time to turn and look at it. A hurried, scrambling sound somewhere beyond the rubber boughs told of a bandicoot getting home to his burrow in a bandicoot's inevitable state of fuss and flurry. The leathernecks in the mangoes were waking up now, and beginning an offensive "Te wakatipu! O do come here! Te wakatipu! O do come here!" . . . Surely it was time for Stephanie to come, if she was coming.

And then I saw her, coming down from the Government House, a vision of floating white muslin and white parasol, crowned by a foolish little pink bonnet just like a rose. . . .

Looking at her, unseen myself, as she came down the hill, the wild improbability of the entire scene took sudden hold of me. New Guinea is a land where the improbable happens every day, and the impossible at least once a week, but six years' residence in this craziest of countries had not shown me anything more unbelievable than Stephanie Hammond, coming down that ill-kept grass walk among the tree-ferns and silk-cottons, at five o'clock in the morning, to meet me, the "hardest case" on all the Papuan island-continent — Stephanie, an it please you, who never had looked, and didn't look now, like anything on earth but the portrait of some Lady Ida or Lady Millicent, hung on a picture-gallery wall — Stephanie, who was as prim as a primrose, and as dainty as a duchess, and as shy as a little white nun. . . .

The very buckles on her Parisian shoes — the very

curls on her immaculately dressed head — seemed to cry out on the impossibility of the thing. All that, within stone's throw of a village of naked savages, and a swamp full of snakes and alligators — with me in the foreground, me, Hugh Lynch, rough, hairy-pawed, burned black with sea and sun, and dressed in a suit of slop-made ducks — a man, I suppose, as God made me, but scarce a gentleman, as society makes the breed. For the stretch between eighteen and thirty is a long one, and Lynch of New Guinea was not Lynch of Harrow and Sandhurst, by just so long a gap.

But the impossible had happened, and here she was, coming to a halt outside the sanctuary of the rubber-tree — pausing on one foot, listening and looking back, and listening and looking forward, with something of girlish fear in her attitude — lips parted, nostrils dilated with her hurried breathing. . . .

No, it was not fair to spy on her like that. I came out from under the branches, offered my hand, and hastened, before she could speak, to thank her for coming, in the humblest words I could command. For I saw that it had been touch and go with her whether she would come or not, and that she was almost repenting at that moment.

"Come in under the tree," I urged, "it's cooler there"— a silly speech to make, at five o'clock in the morning, when the air is almost cold — but I meant, and she understood, that it was safer.

. . . Half dark beneath the boughs, the sun just up, the sea sparkling gold and crystal through the

thick tapestry of leaves that hid us away from all the outer world — earth and air full of the fresh scents of the early day, and never a sound near us but the breathing of the wide Pacific in the bay below. . . . We might have been Adam and Eve alone in Paradise. And in truth, it was very near Paradise to me, to see those blue eyes close to mine in the gloom, and to note the hurried swell of the girlish breast — guessing, as I did, that this pretty agitation was not altogether unconnected with the presence of ugly Hugh Lynch.

She began to speak the moment we were under cover.

"I don't know what you can think of me, Mr. Lynch — I really don't know what anybody could think — but I had to speak to you — and my father is so unfortunately . . . prejudiced . . . unreasonable . . . at times, that he obliges me to act in a way I don't like."

I bowed my head, but remained silent — I wanted her to talk.

"I'm really afraid . . . he must have said something to prevent your calling again — it seems most absurd . . ."

She seemed to lose breath, and had to pause for a moment, but she recovered herself with admirable self-command, and went on.

"I did not want you to think that I had had anything to do with it. I am very fond of my father, but I don't share his prejudice against everyone who is not rich and important. It seems to me — well, snobbery. But, if you will let me say so —"

"Anything," I said, taking her hand, and trying — successfully, I think — to look as if I didn't know what I was doing. Stephanie, after a moment's hesitation, left her hand where it was, and went on speaking, as if she didn't notice either. Oh, the pretty game of love!

"I — I don't think you ought to copy out poetry and give it to me, or send me —"

"Alligators," I supplied.

"Or send me anything . . . you see, we are such slight acquaintances, and people talk, even here. And Papa found your note that evening — it dropped out of my pocket — and he was very angry. He went to look up the quotation, but he didn't find it, because —" with a mischievous laugh, instantly suppressed — "the page wasn't in the book — when he got it. But — really — I hope you understand me, and that you won't write, or send me things any more; it would be so much better not."

"Do you mean it?" I asked. My other hand had closed round her other hand now, and we were standing there in the green-lit cavern of the rubber-tree boughs, holding hands like children. She made the least little effort to draw away but I looked at her with an expression of perfect unconsciousness, and she let her fingers fall again. ("I don't believe he really knows he's doing it," said the innocent girlish face.)

"Of course I mean it," she replied. She seemed to have forgotten that it was I who had asked her to come and hear me. I let my "apology" go by the

board — apologies are the man's excuse for a meeting, as good-bys are the woman's, and neither is needed when it has served its turn.

"I will not write to you, or send you anything again," I said solemnly. Whether I had mental reservations or not, is a matter that concerns only myself.

She looked as if she had not expected just that reply, and there was a perceptible touch of hesitation in her next speech.

"That is what I . . . ask."

"I beg your pardon," I said, rather wickedly.

"That is what I . . ." The voice drooped away.

"What you wish? The sea sounds so loud; it must be a high tide. What you wish? Was that what you said?"

She knew that I was holding her now. She knew that something stronger was holding her. To women like Stephanie, I think the coming of love is almost as the coming of death. My lady paled to the color of her own white dress, and her hands grew cold in mine: I thought for the moment that she was going to faint. But she did not: she looked straight up to me, and through her silence, and through the vivid dawn of red that broke into day upon the cloud-soft pallor of her face, the truth shone out.

Her hands were fast in mine, and the very birds above us could not see through the dark dome of leaf and bough that shut us in. . . .

"That's quite enough," said a rather small and smothered voice, close to my ear. "I think you are the very rudest person I ever — Please — please!"

I did "please," and she drew back, and began to straighten her dear little bonnet and her hair.

"I hope you are ashamed of yourself," she said breathlessly, with an attempt at severity about as successful as a canary's attempt to scratch.

"When are you going to marry me?" was all I answered.

"Marry you?" said Stephanie Hammond, drawing back a good deal further, with something of the look of

"A wild thing caught within a trap,
That sees the trapper coming through the wood."

"I never mean to marry anyone!"

"Then why did you —"

"I didn't — that is, I forgot — and you are so strong — and besides, you really are the very rudest person I ever met."

"By Jove, I hope so!" I exclaimed fervently.

"No one ever was so rude before," reproved my little lady, who was getting back some of her dignity now. "Several men have asked me to marry them, but they did it nicely."

"Yes, and a lot they made by that, didn't they?" I answered. "I'm not asking you at all nicely, I'm only telling you you've got to — after letting me kiss you three times —"

"Three! It was more like thirty!" said Stephanie, flaming scarlet.

"All the more reason. I'm sure such a well-brought-up girl as you are must have been taught that you can't let any man kiss you, unless he's the man you're going to marry. Haven't you?"

"Why — the sister at the convent did say —" faltered Stephanie, almost dumbfounded by this exhibition of Saul among the prophets.

"Of course they did: they were bound to — and so do I. No nice girl ever kisses a man if she isn't engaged to him. Surely you are a nice girl — aren't you?"

Like most really adorable women, Stephanie had not much sense of humor, and my gravity deceived her completely. (I was laughing wildly all the time, internally: but that she could not know.)

"I — I have always tried to be," she said faintly.

"Then, if no nice girl —"

"Please don't say it again: you make me so ashamed."

"If no nice girl . . . does . . . unless she's engaged, and you are a nice girl, and you did, then you must be engaged — to me."

Stephanie looked a little giddy. She opened her mouth, and shut it again. It seemed that my logic was, for the moment, unanswerable.

"Well?" I demanded triumphantly.

But I had not reckoned on the quickness of woman's wit.

"It proves, I suppose, that I am engaged to you,

but not that I am going to marry you," protested Stephanie. "One can be engaged without being married. And I'm not going to marry anyone: I mean to be a nun in a convent, sometime or other — my mother was a Catholic, and I always think I shall be one too, when I am older . . . I'm sure I shall be missed if I stay any longer — good-by, Mr. Lynch."

"Good-by," I said promptly. It is a good general principle always to give a woman what she doesn't expect.

"You must not write to me," said Stephanie, hesitating on one foot, in the airy pose I had already grown to recognize as characteristic of her.

"I will never write," I said.

"You must not call."

"I will never call."

"You must not send me anything."

"I will never send you anything — not even an alligator, or a box of French sweets."

"You must not stare at me like — like — like that!"

"I will not stare at you like that," I parroted, looking down at her shoe-buckles.

"Good-by." She held out her hand. I shook it very politely.

"I'm going now." She gathered up her amazing draperies, and dived through the screen of boughs, while I held back as many as I could grasp.

"Please don't come here again — it might get me into trouble," sounded through the leaves.

"I will not come here again."

"Mr. Lynch, are you a parrot or a human being?"

"Whichever you like," I said humbly. "But I would rather be a New Guinea lory, than either, if I might choose."

There was a moment's struggle between dignity and curiosity, and then —

"Why?" asked a voice, outside on the grass walk.

"Because," I said sadly, "they are called love-birds, and they always sit beside each other on the same . . ."

She must have had at least three starched petticoats on, to make such a rustle getting away.

. . . . . .

It was really rather hard on Worboise, who wasn't in love with anyone, that I should greet him with a hail fit to wake the dead, when I got back to the house, a little after six, and should insist on his rousing up immediately to listen to the tale of my affections. But the old fellow was always good-natured, and he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, and elevated his mighty bulk on end, without a word of complaint. I pitched myself on to an aged hammock chair that almost gave way with the shock, and started on my yarn. Worboise, clad only in a native tunic, and looking, underneath the protecting gauze of the net, just like a very fat joint in a very large meat-safe, listened as eagerly as if the tale had related to himself, and my heart warmed to him as he laughed and slapped his stout legs with appreciation. That he was a very silly old man, and that I was a madly imprudent young

one, did not occur to either of us. Worboise's recent astonishing display of worldly wisdom had been no more than stray drift of flotsam from the sunken Atlantis of a prosperous youth, cast upon the empty shores of age: the barren sands of his sixty unsuccessful years bore no more such fruit. Both of us thought, I suppose as men of the isolated islands do think — in a narrow space, intensely lighted by personal desires and feelings, and circled round by an unconsidered chaos of dark that represented the outer world. You and I, he and she, are all the figures that find room in this narrow lime-light circle: They — the mighty They before whom the people of the inhabited lands burn incense and bow their heads — simply do not exist. This is one, and not the least, of the advantages of the Never-Never lands.

In cold blood, with more than a year of lonely meditation between those days and these, I can see much that I did not see then. It may be that at that juncture, a little more of the tyranny of "They" might not have been an unmixed evil. But I suppose what was to be, was.

Worboise, as I say, was delighted with the progress of affairs, though he evidently felt bound to keep up his character of Mentor by abusing me a little.

"'Asty, 'asty!" he grumbled, looking cloudily through the net. "No patience — no prudence — just as I always said . . . Lord, boy, it's what I'd a-done myself when I was a young feller of thirty." (Worboise would persist in classing me as a mere green youth, from the height of his thirty extra

years.) "I'm blest if I wouldn't. I'm blest if I'm not sorry I never did."

The idea of Worboise, at any age, paying matrimonial court to the counterpart of Stephanie, was too much for me, and I lay back in the chair and roared. But the old fellow did not notice: something had set him off on his autobiographical rocking-horse, and he was swinging away at the usual pace.

. . . "When I was up in the Orokiva country, years and years ago, there was an old chap there was married to nine or ten of as nice girls as you'd wish to see, they'd all got 'eads on them as big as bar'ls, and they was tattooed beautiful, just like watered silk, Omai the feller's name was, and he was a big chief among the Orokiva. Now I was trading there for native rubber with the people, bits of broken bottle glass which they'd shave themselves with was what I gave for it, and I tell you it used to pay me well, though there's that much of original sin in an Orokivan they took like Christians to adulteratin' the stuff with little stones just as soon as they found out it could be done, well, I got to know a good deal of their talk and one of the times I went collectin' rubber Omai he came to my tent and cadged a bit of biscuit which I gave him and he set up on his 'ams nibblin' it like a monkey, and says I, Omai what have you got married that often for it's a . . . expensive thing gettin' married either for the white man or the 'eathen in his blindness, says I, and I don't see how you make out it pays, Omai he was a reel nice feller, he says, just as friendly as it might be you and me,

he says, why, I haven't got all them wives all the time, he says, they doesn't last out well, what with the fightin' and rowin' among themselves, when a man will 'it one or two of them over the 'ead with a pine-apple stone club, he says, and maybe 'it too 'ard, and what with the tonguin' and abusin' of me night and day, he says, which I've eat two of them for, but it don't seem to teach the rest, he says, with all that it takes a good few on hand to make sure that I won't wake up some morning and find myself alone with only one wife like a low-down common feller, he says, besides, he says, when a man's gettin' old, how's he to keep his end up if he ain't got no sons to make into fightin' men and show them the way about, he says, why he's no more account than a mud-crab livin' in an 'ole by itself in the swamp, he says, so that's another reason why I keep my wives up to the mark he says, for what with the alligators and adders and boar constrictors, he says, and the tribes up in the 'ills that's always on the look-out for a nice well-fed baby, in yam-feastin' time, there's no knowing when a house won't find itself right out of children unexpected-like, he says. And then he cadges another two biscuits, and a stick of tobacco, before he goes away, and I gives it him willing, because of the good sensible talk he'd made."

Worboise had been getting up as he spoke, and was now clad in the green and yellow suit of pyjamas that was his usual indoor attire. The glare from the shallow reef-water below the beach slanted through the open door, and shone right upon his face: I thought he looked old and tired.

"Look-a-here, boy," he said, dropping weightily on a chair, and staring down at his bare sunburned feet —"it's true for white men and for black, what Omai said. When a man's gettin' old, without he has children, he's no more account than a crab in a mud-'ole by itself. Fellers don't understand that, not till they're gettin' on. When you're five-and-twenty, you says you'd like to see the woman as could put your neck into the collar — meanin' you wouldn't like to, and don't intend to. When you're a bit more, and you see the other fellers worried with wives that's cross and overworked, and kept awake with cryin' babies, and washin' hangin' all over the 'ouse, and little nippers screamin' and fightin' in the yard, and the feller's tobaccy goin' to pay for Jinny's boots, and 'is bit of money that he was keepin' for the Cup, ate up by Tommy's measles,— well, you says to yourself —'A young man married is a young man marred': thank God I've 'ad the sense to keep me family all under me 'at, says you.

"An' the time goes on some more, and the girls is not as fond of you as they was, but still there's some that's ugly, or a bit the worse for wear, keeps on smilin' sweet as sugar at you, and you goes about sayin' to yourself that you're the devil of a fellow, but that they don't catch this bird with chaff, and you're proud of yourself. And then all of a sudden there's no more girls, and they don't want you at swarrees, and when there's a picnic to the bush, or a drive to the seaside in brakes, according whether it's

Australyer or 'ome, and you goes to take a ticket, they says —' Who do you want it for?'

"And the Jinnys and the Tommys is grown up, and walks about with their fathers, which you thought was quite young fellers same as you till you see that, and then you've got to believe they ain't — same as you.

"So now you thinks — 'Well, if I'm gettin' old, I'm gettin' wise — law, the 'eaps of things I've seen, and the troubles I could keep young chaps out of, if they'd listen to me,'— and you gets 'auntin' round the lads of twenty, and tryin' to give them advice, same as if you was their father — but there you ain't no one's father, and no one wants to 'ear you gab.

"And you keeps gettin' older, and now it's the young fellers of thirty you've a likin' for, because that's the age our Billys and Tommys would have been, if you'd 'ad all them little kids screamin' and wakin' you up of nights, and eatin' and wearin' your tobaccy and your drinks, same as your mates that you was sorry for. And per'aps you're fool enough to get fond of one of them, but just as like as not 'e says to 'imself quiet-like, when you're on the gab, that you're a bloomin' old nuisance any'ow, and — Boy, boy, you don't know 'ow strong you are, don't never clap me on the back again like that. O Lord, Hugh, you've fair knocked the life out of me!"

"Just what you deserve for talking rot!" I said, as he leaned over his chair and coughed, with a certain dampness about his eyes that I don't think the cough

was accountable for. We reached out suddenly for each other's hands, and executed a mutual shake.

"What's it all about?" said I. "Am I to marry nine ladies and eat them when they get quarrelsome?"

"You leave me get round things in my own way, boy; I'm slow, but I'm sure. What I mean to say is, I'm glad you've picked your girl, and I'm glad she's picked you, and I wish the two of you luck, and many of them, for I tell you 'angin' round likin' other men's sons when you're old, because you've got none of your own, is about as much fun as dinin' off the smell of other folks' dinners."

There was a personal note in all this that I could not help but hear. Worboise knew he was losing the man who had been in the place of a son to him, for the best part of a year, and he took it a good deal more hardly than I was worth. But what could I say? If we had been a couple of women, we could have fallen on each other's necks, and wept a little, and had what the tender sex call "a nice cup of tea" together, and so smoothed over the painful moment. Being a man, I could only do what I did do — light my pipe and stroll out on the beach, leaving my old chum to "find himself" as best he might.

Marriage, it seemed to me, even the shadow of marriage to come, changed life upwards from the root, and here was one of the changes. . . . I was learning new things these days, many of them, and Stephanie, the little inexperienced school-girl, was my teacher.

Out there under the palms, with the salt ripple crisping at my feet, and the lonely trade wind humming over the sea, it came to me for the first time in my life, what this age-old institution of marriage really meant. Not the mere ceremony of a church — a dozen ceremonies never would have made Kari, the little savage, my true wife. Not fierce love, such as I had known in my Spanish-American days — ("husband in the sight of heaven," you called me, my Concepcion, tropic lily of the South: yet there was no more of heaven about our bond, than about the gilded chain you broke to come to me). Not even "the mutual help and comfort that one should have of the other." None of these makes true marriage, nor do all three together. What, then? Just all these and something more — something that no poet from Solomon and Euripides, down to Goethe and Meredith, has ever succeeded in putting into words, but that every "true lover" sees and knows, when he looks into the eyes of the woman who is to bear him company through life and into that which lies beyond, where thought sinks broken-winged, and fancy may not follow.

. . .

Love of the body — companionship of the mind — and of the soul, what?

God knows. But it makes true marriage.

All that for Hugh Lynch to learn, through a girl's blue innocent eyes — Hugh, who at thirty thought the rose of human love had not a petal left to unfold before him, not a breath of scent that he had not drunk away! . . . Small wonder, indeed, that in those

wretched weeks in the Owen Stanley Range, I had not known what was the trouble that had taken hold of me; for it was one to which, after all that had gone by, I was as new as Stephanie herself.

It may have been because of this that the thought of these old loves did not trouble me, for it seemed to me that no man could give more than his best, and that Stephanie, alone of all women in the world, had had, and would have, that of me.

. . . . . .

If I do not get on faster, I shall never finish the story I have set out to tell.

There is so much to say about those few cool-season weeks, when the southeast trade ran like a golden river through the air, and nights were chill towards sunrise, and the red full moon that had burned like a coin new-hot from minting, in the heavy months of November and December, now rose in the west clear and cool as ice from the far-off peaks of Mount Victoria,— so much to say, and yet how impossible it is to say it!

In those days, it seemed to me as though all my life were gathering itself together like a river rushing down to some great fall — drawing every tributary stream from far and near into the one resistless flood, carrying away on its surface like withered leaves the flotsam and jetsam of the passing days — sweeping always onward, always faster and faster in its deepening channel, towards the one sure goal whither all the forces of all the world were calling it. . . .

Looking backwards now, as one might look from

the grave, the days and nights pass by in my memory as a flying blur, lit only by those brilliant stars that marked yet another meeting with Stephanie. For we had met again, and yet again — with the knowledge of my lady's incomings and outgoings brought me by the faithful Tararua, I was seldom at a loss for an opportunity, and as for using it when it came — well, a man who has learned his love-making among the Latin races of Spanish America, generally knows his lesson well. . . . Still, for all that, and all that, progress was sometimes slow.

I had kept that extorted vow of not writing: I could do without it now — and as for presents, if I sent none (in accordance with my promise), I brought many. It was very seldom that we could meet in the daytime, but in the quiet hours that came after all the native servants were gone home, and the Governor had tucked himself under his mosquito net at the other side of the house, Stephanie's small window, that looked out on the clump of lemon trees beyond the back veranda, saw many reproductions of the "balcony scene" so familiar in the loves of the southern world. The village went to rest early: the lights of Port Moresby died out soon after ten — we might have been alone on a desert island, by the time midnight had tinkled out from the gilt French clock in the dining-room. . . . And at midnight, or a little after, would come that "rudest man that Stephanie had ever met," creeping into the shadow of the lemon trees (for the moon was terribly bright) and waiting, perhaps for minutes, perhaps for hours, until a little

stir inside the room, like a bird turning round in its nest, would tell that Someone was awake, and waiting too. . . . Then — it was sometimes a smartly fashioned bouquet of fragrant paw-paw blossoms that flew in through the high-up window, and hit an invisible mosquito-curtain with a swaying shock — sometimes it was just a loose bunch of brilliant orchids, cold with midnight dew,— once it was a pearl as big as a pea, that I had fished up off the Angabunga River, and sent flying in, cased in one of Nature's jewel cases — a hard-shelled pod from a silk-cotton tree, tight packed with snowy down. And once (but that night she would not show her face) it was a wreath of orange-blossom smelling sweet as honey, that dropped through the darkness, right into her arms.

I waited till the bay turned gray in the dawning, but never a gleam of the silken wrapper, or a sight of the small soft face shadowed by a loosely twisted knot of hair, came to reward me that night. And the next time I came, there was no greeting for me either, and no soft footstep stirring on the mats within; so that I, thinking I had surely some rights of my own by this time, was constrained to walk under the house (raised, like all New Guinea houses, six or eight feet from the ground, on piles) and rap cautiously on the floor of Mademoiselle's room. This brought her to the window at once, agitated lest someone should hear: and she stood looking down and scolding softly, like a small soft bird chirping reproach at the disturber of its nest.

"Careless — impudent — rash?" I said. "So I am — always was. Come down and teach me to be good."

"Most certainly not," said Stephanie. "It wouldn't be right."

"Not right to teach me to be good? Oh, Stephanie!" I remonstrated, in the serious tones that always puzzled her unhumorous little head.

"It's always right to teach people to be good," corrected she solemnly — "that is, if you know how yourself — but I don't think one ought to teach them out in the moonlight at three o'clock in the morning."

"Then come under the lemon trees," I suggested. "There's no moonlight there. Stephanie, you can't imagine how I want to talk to you — every time I've seen you I've left all the things I've wanted to say."

"If you wouldn't be — rude —" she hesitated.

"If you mean you're afraid I'll kiss you, why, I won't."

"I don't see why you must always say everything — men are so — so —"

"Yes, of course they are; but you've got to teach me better. Come out and teach me. Do!"

"You ask so nicely that —"

"You'll come?"

"That I think you must have had a good deal of practice," said Stephanie shrewdly.

I lied bravely, of course, but continued to beg. And in a little while — she came.

"Only because I know Papa will wake up if you go on whispering like a — steam-escape valve — down

there," she said. "Go away and wait out of the light, so that you can't be seen, and I'll come in two minutes — for just a second."

All the same I had some little time to wait before she appeared, got up in some pretty silk thing with ribbons on it and looking almost as she did in the day time. (Steel curling pins, I understand, will do much in ten minutes, if you can endure some pain in a good cause.) She came straight to me in the shadow of the trees, and put her hand in mine like a child. The moonlight and the magic of the hour seemed almost to have transfigured her: she shone like a fairy — eyes, wavy hair, white neck and arms half uncovered by the floating gown, white teeth that glittered as she smiled — the very nails on her little fingers were sparkly and starry in the crystal light, and her step was almost a dance.

"You look like nothing human — you look as if you would spread your wings and fly away if I touched you," I said.

"So I would," assented the sprite-like figure, illogically leaving its hand in mine. "I would fly without that — I would give a bit of my soul to have wings to-night. Hugh, do you ever wish — on moonlight nights when you hear the sea calling as it sometimes does — you know?"

"Aye, I know," said I.

"Or when the wind that gets up at night, and blows down from the mountains and the wonderful places where no one's ever been — when that wind comes in at your window, waking you up, and whispering to you

— don't you long to go and follow it, away under the moon, and find . . . What is that one wants to find, Hugh?"

"Dear girl, if I could tell you that, I'd be able to tell you what all the God-forsaken lot of us gypsy fellows have wanted to know ever since the days of Ulysses, and haven't discovered yet."

"Does no one find it, Hugh?"

"No," I said. "But we go on looking — and on the way, we find new countries — and gold — and diamonds — and Stephanies. And we never own the countries, and the gold runs through our hands. But the Stephanies —"

"Well?" The small hand slid very softly away from mine, and the dark head bent down till I could only see a neck and a coil of hair.

"The Stephanies — we keep," I said, and lifted her head so that her eyes met mine.

"You promised —!"

"I did, and I'm keeping my promise," I said. "But Stephanie — don't you think this thing has gone on long enough?"

"What thing?" she parried.

"This — tormenting," I said, letting free the bird-like little head. "This playing fast-and-loose — and flirting — and refusing — when you know —"

"What?"

She had drawn deeper into the shade, and I could not see her face, but the laces on the breast of her gown were fluttering like imprisoned butterflies,

though here, in the shelter of the tree, there was not a breath of wind.

"You know," I said, scarcely able to find words, but determined to have it out once for all —" that you will have to marry me."

No statue could have been stiller — save for that beating of the light laces above her heart.

"It's not — not worthy of you," I said. "It's not the best in you that's behaving like this, Stephanie, it's the worst — the nasty little streak of cruelty that — women all have it —"

I stopped for want of breath, and then went on —

"It all comes to this — when are we to be married?"

Dead silence: the scent of the lemon blossoms heavy-sweet above our heads: very far away, in the dark hill-ranges, the wood-cutter bird, that wakes at dead of night, sounding its sharp chip, chip.

Then — the least rustle on the grass, and a footstep. . . .

"No, you don't!" I said, reaching out in the dusk of the lemon tree, and filling my hands with cold slippery silk, and something warm and alive inside it. "You've got to answer now — or go, and never come back."

"How can I go?" asked a faint whisper, "when you are holding my dress — and me?"

I loosed her and stepped back.

"Go now, if you wish," I said, "but if you do, it's for good. This has got to come to an end one way

or the other. What do you think I'm made of? Say when you'll marry me, or say good-by. I can stand that, I guess. I can't stand what you've been giving me."

"You know," said something invisible, with a shake in its voice, "that Papa would never . . . never . . ."

"You may leave Papa to me. Let's keep to the point for once. Is it good-by, or is it not?"

The wood-cutter bird had ceased, and the night seemed holding its breath. The five great jewels of the Southern Cross swung low among the leaves of the lemon tree, and the moon was almost down. Where had the moments flown to? The morning must be near.

Somebody was sobbing a little in the dark; somebody was stretching out soft hands round the trunk of the tree.

"It's — it's not," said Stephanie close at my side — and burst into a flood of tears.

I knew better than to break my promise now, though never was lover more sorely tempted. I kept my arm about her, while she hid her face on my shoulder, and cried her heart out, supported by the strength she loved. It was all her girlish life, I knew, that was flowing away on that flood, all the old, and the tried, and the dear: the familiar faces, and the England and home that she would see no more — all the sweet solitude that girlhood loves, and the maiden dream-flowers that spring between Diana's crescent moon,

but never blow within the hard gold circle of the wedding ring. . . .

The storm ended as suddenly as it had begun. My little white lady stood up and wiped her eyes, and spoke in a steady tone.

"When you like, Hugh — or when we can — you know there will be trouble; but we won't talk of that to-night."

And I knew, by something in her voice, that Stephanie, the elf, the flirt, I should see no more.

. . . . . .

A great wind sprang up as we moved towards the house again: the leaves were whirling under our feet, and it was dark with the darkness that comes at night's ebb-tide.

"Tell me now," I begged —"I have asked so often, and you never would say — did you see me — those nights when I saw you — long ago?"

"Yes," said the now grave Stephanie. "I saw you — every night. Your face had a ring of light round it, and it was asleep. But when I looked at it, it used to wake, and vanish like a flash. And one night, very late, when I had been alone and thinking, I was so sorry when it disappeared, that I cried."

"I saw you then," I said. "I saw you every time. . . . There's sorcery in New Guinea — the air is full of it. . . . I could believe anything might happen here. But if there are strange powers, good or bad, wandering loose in this queer country, they've worked to bring us together."

"Oh, no, Hugh!" she said, shivering. "That would mean ill-luck."

"Ill-luck! Don't you believe it," I answered. . . . "Isn't it time to break my promise now?"

And, getting no answer, I broke it.

"Now," I said, "get in and sleep well, and don't dream of devils, or if you do, remember that all the devils in Papua and hell together aren't going to come between you and me."

CHAPTER X

THREE days later, I was on my way to the Owen Stanley Range. This is not the tale of my gold-hunting experiences. If it were, I should have a strange enough story to relate. But no one, now, would care to hear how I found a wonderfully good-paying creek up in the unknown ranges, that time I went bird-shooting — how I returned to it secretly, after winning Stephanie's promise to marry me — how I took near a thousand pounds out of it in three weeks' working from sunrise to dark, and got back to Port Moresby when I had obtained all I could find at the time, without anyone being a bit the wiser. No one would care to hear it — because the story is an old one now. That happened which does not happen, when a man finds good-paying gold, and cannot follow it up. The birds of the air, or the natives of the hills, "carried the matter" eventually, and — well, I believe there are quite a number of people doing well on the Kukurukufield at present. But the discoverer is not one, for reasons which I have already mentioned.

Garia and I got back to port late one very warm evening, with rain low-hanging in a purple sky. Tararua, you may be sure, was at hand to welcome her lord's return. She came up and danced in front

of Worboise's cottage, till her skirts stood out in a horizontal circle round her big brown limbs, chanting all the while in a loud, brassy voice the virtues, adventures and manly graces of Garia, the carriers and myself. And the way that loving pair rubbed noses when they met, was enough to make you understand the flatness of Papuan features once and for all.

I had hardly patience to wait until they had let go, before I deluged Tararua with eager inquiries about Stephanie. But she had not much to tell.

"Sinuabada (the chieftainess) he all right," was the gist of her news. "Sometime he go walk-about, look out along mountain he tell, 'Tararua, you wantum husband belong you, you sorry he go?' I tell—'I no wantum flenty, wantum little fellow bit.' Sinuabada he look all same he cly, he say—'Long time him stop away!'"

"Who?" I asked, "Garia?"

"No Garia, Taubada Lineti. 'Long time he stop,' Misi Sefania he say 'Too much—long time—'"

"Tararua, Misi Sefania doesn't use those words," I remonstrated.

"I no savvy—he talk strong, he breeve all same dat—" she heaves her tattoed bosom in a tremendous sigh. "Sometime I go look out along track, little bit I cly, Misi Sefania he say—'Tararua, man belong you, man belong me, he long way away, you—me all same sister.' I tell—'Tararua liking you flenty, you good along Tararua.' By-'n'-by Miss Sefania, me, been little bit cly, by-'n'-by finish cly, walk along Govamen' House, Misi Sefania he say—'You no tell,'

he give me free stick tombacco, I no tell. Misi Sefania he flighten along Govana, Tararua he flenty flighten along Govana, he no tell nothing all-a-time, you got-tum tombacco Tararua?"

. . . . . .

Worboise had nothing in the way of news to impart, save the fact that Carolan had been made Chief Magistrate, the former holder of that post having died while away on leave. This did not trouble me as it might have done a little earlier. The position (virtually that of a judge) was certainly a good one for a young barrister, who had probably had no very rosy prospects at home — but if he had been made a Governor-General of Australia, it could not have altered his fortunes or mine, on the point where they clashed. Things had gone a long way beyond that.

I met Carolan himself next morning, when I was on my way up to Government House in full daylight, to face out His Excellency, and demand consent to my engagement. Something in my presence there at that hour, I think, or possibly something in the festive character of my dress (I don't deny that I have the ugly man's weakness for a bit of finery) must have told the new Chief Magistrate what my errand was, for his face seemed literally to turn yellow as we neared each other, under the historic rubber tree, and I could see his throat working inside his collar as if he were going to choke. I don't think one man was ever better hated by another, than I by Carolan. As for me, I did not hate him at all; in truth, I rather prided myself on the fact that I could see quite a

number of good points about him. He was certainly a handsome fellow, with his well-groomed black hair, and his fine brown eyes, and his straight features and neat black mustache — he was an able official, and a man without a lazy bone in his body — he had the good sense to be very fond of Stephanie, and the decency not to tell tales about a successful rival; which, after all, he might easily have done, if he liked. And I had won against him all along the line, and I was going to win yet a good deal more — and really, I could quite afford (I felt) to be patronizing and kind to the good fellow, Carolan, in spite of his ugly looks at me.

For all my conceit, for my patronage, my triumph, Fate was later on to exact a full and bitter penalty. No shadow of this, however, fell across my merry mood of the morning, as I went on my way to demand and win my own.

I checked Carolan in his walk — though he did not look as if he wanted to stop — and congratulated him on his recent promotion, rather with the air of a millionaire kindly felicitating a poor man on the acquirement of a fortune of some few hundred pounds.

He turned yellower than ever (no one turns white in New Guinea, the climate doesn't allow it) and seemed as if he would pass on without reply. Then suddenly he stopped.

"I suppose you're going to ask His Excellency's consent," he said, without preface, his eyes so full of pain the while, that I felt somebody or other ought to be sorry for him — as one feels that somebody or

other ought to take care of a lost dog in the street — no business of one's own, but still it's a pity. . . .

"Well, since you ask me, I am," I said.

"I suppose you know what he'll say?"

"Not so sure of that," I answered, with a smile that meant "I don't much care."

"And you mean," said Carolan, pulling at his collar as if it were throttling him, "you mean to take that girl — who might be, ought to be, a duchess — and bury her in a tin hut in the New Guinea bush — a girl just out of the schoolroom, who couldn't possibly know her own mind — you've entrapped her, and worked on her feelings, to that extent —"

"Steady on," I said. "What you mean is that I've been man enough to make her love me, and you haven't; but I'd advise you to put it in a less offensive way. We aren't exactly intimates, you know."

"Oh, I know you well enough!" cried Carolan, breathing hard. "All you care about is your own damned fancy for her. . . . I've loved her for years before you ever knew she was alive — and came to this God-forsaken hole just to be near her — and kept myself from speaking because I cared for her too much to do it till I'd something worth having to offer her. I . . . loved her. . . . I'd have —"

He seemed about to choke in good earnest, or to cry — I didn't know which, but I was rather sorry for the poor devil, so I got out my pipe, and occupied myself in lighting it, to give him time. I thought it as well to have the matter out then and there.

"Do you — do you think you deserve her?" he said, or rather gasped, at last.

"Why, no," I said. "I don't think any man does or could — so it may as well be me as another. May I ask where this catechism is tending to?"

"It's tending to this," said Carolan, who was growing hotter and hotter, "that I advise you to leave her alone."

"You advise? You do?" I said, beginning to smoke. "That's rather good, you know."

"You — you're no more fit to tie her shoes for her than — than — a nigger —"

"Look here," I said, "there's enough of this. You've sworn at me once. You've insulted me more than once. You know I'm not the sort of man to take much more. Only for her, I'd not have taken as much. I don't know what you're driving at, or what you mean, and I don't want to. You go. You go quick, if you're wise."

"Oh, you don't know!" said the Chief Magistrate, stepping from one foot to the other in a most amazing way — as if he would and he wouldn't, he'd go and he'd stop — indecision and rage at war upon his face. "You don't know! Well, I know. I know a good deal about you — a d—— sight more than you —"

"Good morning," I said, taking off my helmet with a sweep, and walking on. If I had stayed, I should have caught him neck and crop, and slung him over the fence, in just about ten seconds more, and it was not the time, or the place, for that sort of justice. I

did not look back till I got to the top of the hill, and when I did turn, he was gone.

As for his talk, I minded it no more than I minded the chattering of the parrots in the trees. Those might laugh who won, and those might weep who lost — weep, or rage, or talk mysterious nonsense — it was all the same to me.

. . . . . .

"Of course, you knew I would refuse," said His Excellency.

It was half dusk in the inner room where we were sitting; there were no windows, and the light that slanted in through the open glass door was filtered through heavy canvas sun-blinds lowered all along the veranda, to shut off the intolerable glitter of the sea. The Governor's study was painted in green; its wooden walls were hung with native clubs and spears, scarce distinguishable in the dusk; its furniture was of the plainest — just a writing-table piled high with papers, two chairs, and a bookcase. At the table, close to the glass door, sat His Excellency dressed in smartest white from collar to shoe-sole, neat and imperturbable as ever, and perfectly cool, to all appearance, on a morning hot enough to fry an egg.

A man who has walked through the torrid heat of a tropic day to proffer a request to someone sitting Olympically apart in a shaded study, is at a marked disadvantage — as hundreds of suitors and petitioners of one kind and another have been made to feel, in other lands than New Guinea. Whatever condition

you may have started in, you are sure to arrive steaming at every pore, your clean collar drooping like a withered lily, your white shoes smeared with dust, your carefully brushed hair composing itself into a Tommy-Atkins "quiff" on your crimson forehead. . . . Out of the glare and heat you come, smelling of sun and dust, into the sanctuary where the Other Man sits among his signs of office, cool and calm and unperturbed. . . . You may be infinitely the cooler of the two, in the sense that really matters; but you don't look like it, and he does.

It may have been some consciousness of this uncomfortable fact, or it may have been plain common or garden nervousness, but I found it harder than I could have believed to enter upon my business, after the Papuan orderly had ushered me into the study, and withdrawn his black halo, and blue and white uniform tunic to the veranda outside — after the Governor had greeted me politely, offered me a chair, and set himself down in an intolerably wooden attitude upon his own. The more so, because I knew that he had guessed my business at once, and I saw that he was bent on using every advantage he possessed, of manner, self-possession, or position, to "down" me before ever I opened my lips.

If he had not been Stephanie's father, and somewhat like her, I should have resented this; but my heart was soft that morning, and I could not cherish dislike towards a hard-faced naval officer of fifty, obviously inclined to make himself disagreeable, when the carriage of his head and the shape of his hands,

and the very curve of his eyebrows, were full of associations unspeakably moving to me. I suppose daughters have been observed to resemble their fathers before in the history of the world, but the fact that a young girl with the face like a flower could be visibly shadowed forth in the countenance of a tough, middle-aged, teak-hearted, steel-eyed sailor, really seemed to me a sort of miracle — that day. And certainly, the likeness made my voice humbler, and my speech more hesitating than I had pictured either, not very long before.

I can't remember the words I used. Who can recall just what he may have said, in a moment of strong emotion? There is a temperature of the mind at which the metal of speech is fused. Out of the mold of such hours, Fate, the great artificer, may cast eternal figures of sorrow or of joy. But in the casting, the ingots are lost.

I remember the Governor's reply. It was as I have written.

He had been sitting like his own memorial cut in granite, while I spoke — never moving a finger-nail or a fold of his clothes; his gray eyes, with their small inscrutable pupils, fixed hard upon me all the time. Only an Englishman, and an official Englishman, can sit like that. I, Celt and gypsy through and through, use gesture freely at all times — perhaps I did so more freely than usual just then — but I felt that he disliked and despised it, and deliberately chose to underline the contrast offered by his own immobility.

"Of course, you knew that I should refuse."

Well, I had known it. But I had hoped for, I scarce knew what discussion, argument, objection — I was ready for all. I had put my case well enough — our mutual love; my capacity for making a good trove; the nine hundred and odd pounds worth of gold dust at present buried under the floor of my bedroom. I had offered to build a comfortable home in Port Moresby, and let Stephanie live near her father during the numerous absences I should no doubt find necessary from time to time. I had put forth every fact that told in my favor, and prepared myself to combat every possible objection that might be raised. In short, I was wound up for the fray, and eager for it.

And my opponent declined even to unsheathe his sword. I was not worth so much as that.

It cost me a good deal to say, quietly and with due restraint:

"I did know it, sir."

The Governor maintained his position unaltered. The light from the door fell on his sleek, gray hair, and slanted down upon the well-kept hands that lay crossed on the table.

"Then, may I ask," he said, "to what I am indebted for the honor of this visit?"

If I had not seen by the whitening of his knuckles as his hands pressed down on one another, that he was really beginning to weaken, I should have turned my back on him then and there, and slammed his inhospitable door behind me. But . . .

A man who lives as near to Nature as I have lived, has curious intuitions. In that moment, I saw clear through the wall of his stony demeanor, as if it had been glass, and behind it crouched the figure of a man, no longer young, never much loved, too cold for sympathy, too proud for fellowship, unable to endure defeat, yet momentarily pushed nearer and nearer to the grip of that dreaded necessity.

If I had felt the weight of his personality, he had assuredly felt the weight of mine. He knew that he was beaten. He knew, as well as if I had said it, that his consent was in reality a dead letter; that the silent, bitter sex struggle which sets the father against the daughter's suitor, and the mother against the wife of her son, had been fought, and lost. Youth, once more, was to be served; age, once more, was to swallow defeat. . . . Yet he struggled against the inevitable; he refused to know that he was beaten.

This passed in an instant. There was but a brief pause before I answered, hitting straight home:

"I came because I want to be on good terms — if possible — with my wife's father. Now you have it, sir."

There was no need to enlarge on that "if possible." In the latter end of the nineteenth century, a girl who is of age, and a man who knows his own mind, don't eat out their hearts and wear away their youth waiting for one another, simply because an early-Victorian parent chooses to deny that intangible "blessing" so dear to the soul of the novelist. They just manage to get on without it, and the story closes at the second

chapter, which would not do at all in a three-hundred-page novel, but is quite satisfactory in real life.

. . . What is a man to do, who cannot give in, and must?

Dead silence fell on the room. The Governor's flinty eyes stared at me; his hands pressed harder than ever on one another; he swallowed in his throat, but did not speak.

"Poor old devil!" my thoughts wandered. "Poor old devil, it's going to be rough on him. . . . What a noise the wind makes in those palm-trees; you'd think it was rain, if you didn't know. . . . One of the little red king-birds, that note; they don't often come so far down. . . . Look at that spider on the wall; he'd stretch a dinner-plate. . . . Surely, is that — impossible! — by Jove, though, it is!"

There was a rustle of drapery along the veranda, a pat-pat of quick light footsteps, and in another moment a cyclone of white muslin had whirled into the room, and across it, and the Governor was enveloped in something like a breaking wave.

When things cleared a bit, it became apparent that Stephanie was sitting on her father's knee, and that her arms were round his neck, and her head on his shoulder, and she was kissing him. . . . Oh, altogether too much, with her unhappy lover, whom she starved on one kiss a week, looking on! And she was murmuring and coaxing and petting, cooing and beseeching, in a way fit to melt the heart of a brass belaying-pin. I could only catch a stray word here and

there, "Pappy — darling Pappy!" (kiss), "Dearest Papa!" (small hand cuddling itself coaxingly round the back of a stiff sunburnt neck), "Dear Pappy, I love you!" (brown head rubbed up and down a starched coat lapel), "Darling, do be good to Seppie!"— and then the prettiest of baby talk, that I was almost ashamed to hear, charged as it was with reminiscences of those days in which I had no share — the days that were the father's only. After all, how very few were the years since this promised wife of mine had been a little child!

They were few indeed to her father's heart, in that moment, I think. The soft young face laid so close to his own time-beaten features were breaking down his resolution inch by inch, as a shattered sea-wall crumbles to the tide. I saw his head bend over her brown curls, and his arms close tight about his baby, as if to hold her fast against the world — and then — I left the room quietly, and went out on to the veranda. They did not see me go.

Up and down within the canvas shades I walked, waiting for those two inside to make an end of their difference, and a beginning of their good-by. There were strange thoughts in my mind — thoughts that had never so much as neared it before. The world was widening fast. . . . As clearly as I had seen Stephanie a moment before, I now saw another Stephanie, somewhere far away in the unknown years of the coming century; and she had brown hair with a shade of red in it; and she looked at me with Stephanie's blue eyes under someone else's straight heavy

brows, and she put her head on my shoulder, and told me she was going away from me — going for always — with a man who was no good. . . .

I declare, if the action had not been unthinkable, I would have gone to the Governor then and there, and told him that I gave him back his daughter. But those are the things that one does not do. I only went on walking up and down, and said to myself as I walked —

"May God send me to everlasting torment — if there is a God, and if there is a hell — should I fail to take care of her."

When I went back, my *fiancée* and her father were seated apart, looking much as usual, save that Stephanie's eyes were a little pink. She got up when she saw me.

"I'll leave you together — you will want to talk," she said, escaping. Tararua was waiting on the veranda, having that moment sprung mysteriously from nowhere. Through the glass, I saw Stephanie, so to speak, collect the Papuan, and whisk her away, with a gesture of her finger, and then the black and the white were gone.

The Governor addressed me at once, and very courteously. A brave man, he was bravest in defeat.

"I can't deny my daughter, Mr. Lynch," he said. "Especially as it would be of no effect. It is to be — as you wish. . . . I think I'm getting old; be patient with me for a minute."

He put his hand across his face, and leaned on his

elbow, collecting himself in silence. Presently he looked up.

"To make the best of — what I can't call a good bargain"— he said, "I intend to help you into a somewhat better position. It's impossible that you should go on picking up a living pearling and digging and trading, if you are to marry my daughter. I don't happen to fancy your personality, Mr. Lynch, but I believe you are the right kind of man to break in a rough country, and I am short of Resident Magistrates, so — I am prepared to appoint you to the charge of the Eastern Division. You can live at Samarai in a decent house, and go out on patrol with your police as often as necessary, leaving Stephanie safe at home. The salary is four hundred; in this country, you can live on that. I will allow my daughter something if I can, but I am comparatively a poor man myself, or I shouldn't be here. You can use your — gold —" the phrase seemed to stick in his throat —"to furnish the house: the Government will provide you with a cutter, and you can have police orderlies. There are a fair number of white people in the East End now; she won't be without society — of a kind. If the natives chance to get you on your patrols — they're a bad lot about the D'Entrecasteaux and Milne Bay — she could come back to me, and I would look after her and any — others — there might be."

I broke in with thanks for his kindness, and a word or two as to what I hoped I could do with the appointment — which indeed gratified me very much,

for a Papuan "R. M." is a little king in his own domain, and the exploring and fighting likely to be provided by the Eastern Division were entirely to my taste. His Excellency waited till I had done, and then went on as if I had not spoken:

"You had better go down to Australia for a little while on your marriage — she will be the better of a change, and you will have the furniture to buy. You can have the *Merrie England* to travel in — I was intending to send her shortly in any case, with despatches. I can't leave the Eastern Division without a magistrate much longer, so I suppose it will have to be — soon."

He rose to his feet.

"I'm sure you will excuse me now, Mr. Lynch. It's tiring weather, and, as I said — I grow old."

We had shaken hands, and I was out on the veranda again, and the glass door was shut behind me, and the blind was drawn. Middle age was alone with itself and its sorrow. The curtain had risen on the drama of Youth.

Of course, I found Stephanie waiting for me in the sitting-room; and, of course, I made her pay me liberally for the envy and jealousy she had aroused that morning. When she had scolded me for untidying her curls and her laces (I liked nothing better than to have her scold me, and I think she knew it) and when she had prinked and preened at the glass a little, we came on other and graver matters. We were in a cool inner room, shut away from light and heat, and I was fanning her while I talked.

"Do you know," said I, "that your father is going to lend us the *Merrie England?*"

"What for?" asked Mademoiselle, lying back in her hammock chair, and playing with a cluster of butterfly orchids she had fastened into the bosom of her dress.

"To go down to Brisbane in, when we are married."

Stephanie made a face. I should as soon have expected a lily of the valley to make faces, sometime before, but the human nature of my moonlight lady was becoming more apparent now.

"Why, the *Merrie England* is going down in about three weeks!"

"So I believe."

"Then that settles it, of course — it's far too soon."

"Is it?" I asked, dropping the fan, because my hands were otherwise occupied. "Is it, Stephanie?"

Well, well! who is going to tell what he says, on such an occasion as this? I shall tell what she said, instead.

". . . Impossible."

". . . I don't want to hear another word about it."

". . . We couldn't, I couldn't, it couldn't — there!"

". . . Not the least sorry — for anyone so silly."

". . . No, no, no, no, no!"

". . . How can I speak when you're —"

". . . Hugh, stop!"

". . . Oh, I'll say anything — let go, you crocodile!"

". . . I'll think about it — perhaps —"

". . . Well, then, I will — go away, please, immediately — I've had a great deal more than enough of you this morning."

"I'm going," I said, taking up my sun-helmet "But Stephanie —"

"Well?" She was half way through the door.

"Tell me — how did you manage to act the angel-in-the-machine just at the right moment? Were you — listening?"

"Most certainly not," said His Excellency's daughter, with icy dignity. "How can you ask such a thing?"

"I ask because miracles don't often happen, in New Guinea or elsewhere," said I coolly.

"Well, then," said Stephanie, quite through the door now, and putting back her head into the room, 'I didn't listen, of course, but —"

"What?"

"Tararua was —"

"Where?"

"Under the floor. Do you think you're invisible, walking up the hill in a white suit, at eleven in the morning?"

As she made herself invisible directly, there was nothing left for me to do but go, and I went.

When does joy or sorrow meet us with the face that we had pictured? Stephanie's father had consented. Stephanie had given in to an early marriage.

Three weeks would see us made one, and sailing south to Paradise, in the *Merrie England*. Only a little while ago, I should have thought that my heart would burst with happiness, were such a cornucopia of good fortune to be poured out upon a single day. But someone has to pay for everybody's joy; and I had seen the price that two had had to pay for mine. It was a tempered, almost a grave happiness that I bore away with me that morning, though

> "Never yet so sweetly ran my blood,
> Calming itself to the long-wished for end,
> Full to the banks, close on the promised good."

CHAPTER XI

THE news of my good fortune spread all over Port Moresby and the surrounding country, in a day or two. Lynch was to marry the Governor's daughter. Lynch had cut out Carolan, the Chief Magistrate who was first cousin to an Earl, and had enough of a "pull" at home to make him sure of being Governor himself some day. Lynch was to be made "R. M." of the Eastern Division. Lynch was to have the loan of the Government steam yacht, to go down to Brisbane for the honeymoon. Lynch, in fine, was on the top of the wave of prosperity, floating ahead at a rate that amazed everyone who knew him, but none more than himself.

Of course Lynch was popular under these circumstances, though he had never been hail-fellow-well-met with the Port Moresby crowd at any time — witness the fact that, in a land where every man was known familiarly as Tommy This, Jack That, Bill the Other, his Christian name was allowed to rest in obscurity, except so far as Worboise was concerned. But then Worboise was my "mate" — a word that means much to those who live under the Southern Cross.

Did I enjoy this sudden burst of popularity — the eagerness to treat at the "hotel," the number of new intimates who came in the evenings to pass an hour

with Worboise and myself — the ready smiles and hand-shakes of the Government officials, who hitherto had scarcely seemed aware of my existence? No.

It was not because I felt the whole affair was more or less hollow — most popularity is that, when you come to think of it. It was because my pride was hurt — doubly hurt, in that everyone seemed to regard me as suddenly raised in the social scale, whereas I had self-respect enough to think myself no less a man than the Governor, outside his official standing — and in the fact that I was to owe considerable advantage to my wife.

Rather, much rather, on the whole, would I have kept her in my own way, had that been possible. The advantages of the "R. M."-ships were many, but it carried its penalties too. Still, the matter was settled, and who was I, to complain that Fortune's gifts weighed over heavily?

. . . . . .

I find myself unable to write much about those brief weeks of our engagement. It is all nonsense to say that "coming events cast their shadows before." They don't — a man whose life has had as many events in it as mine knows that. But when one is living over past days in thought, events do cast their shadows, so strongly that one can see little else but the foreboding shadow. Those few weeks were happy, but I cannot think of them as happy now, remembering to what they led.

. . . . . .

The days and nights ran by — suns rose above the purple Astrolabe, and set beneath Port Moresby Bay, in all the unimaginable splendor of New Guinea skies and seas. The mangoes, pendent on long string-like stalks beneath huge domes of fiery green, began to swell and ripen; the great dark forest trees, with the pale heliotrope-colored flowers, were putting forth their poignantly-scented bloom. It was at the break of the seasons: the burning days were close upon us now. When they came,— when those fast-ripening fruits were dropping from the stem, and the flamboyant flowered, and the frangipanni was all white — Stephanie and I would not be there to see. We should be dreaming side by side on the deck of the *Merrie England,* under the shady awning, watching the peridot greens and enamel blues of the Great Barrier Reef grow pale beneath the

"Orange sunset waning low"

— seeing the fivefold jewel of the Southern Cross light up above the long dark Queensland shore, and the sea-fires spray about our shearing bows, and the fairy coral islands, all around our track, spread coasts of ivory and pearl beneath the silver moon. . . . A sailor's honeymoon, in truth — a sailor's dream of Paradise.

The days went by. It was the week before the wedding now, and Stephanie was never to be found without a needle in her hand, when I went to see her, and mysterious cocoons of rufflings and frillings

seemed to involve the whole of Government House, and almost escape down the avenue. My bride was just a little nervous and a little fretful, too, and the days when she kept me on short commons of kind words were more numerous than the days when she called me pretty, mischievous names of her own devising, and coquetted with me on the veranda steps, coming and going, after her own inimitable fashion. I took the bitter and the sweet alike, and did not complain. I could afford to be patient.

The days went on. Now it was the day before the wedding, and Worboise, whose exultation had been unspeakable from the beginning, was going about choking and chuckling to an extent that almost suggested incipient apoplexy. When the evening came, nothing would do him but he must let loose the sentiment with which he was brimming over, by reading aloud to me extracts from the idiotic novels he kept in huge accumulations under his bed. I could not prevent him from selecting the treacliest bits of these, and giving them out with a tearful quiver in his fat voice that nearly drove me insane. It was a moonlight evening with a fresh wind; I remember every palm about the house was a tossing fountain of silver, and the coral beach below the house shone like a marble floor. A night on which no man with the wild drop in his blood could rest quiet in a house, even had it not been that "white night" of sleeplessness and nervous tension that is the usual forerunner of a wedding-day.

And on such a night as this, my mate sat at the table, within range of the heat and reek of the dirty

kerosene lamp, reading from "The Martyrdom of Marguerite."

"'Erbert, my 'eart is yours and yours alone. The 'oly vows that I have vowed stand for hever between you and me, but think not, though separated far from thee, the 'eart of Marguerite can wax cold to 'im she loves. We meet no more on hearth, but ho my 'Erbert, in 'eaven —"

"It fair turns me inside out," broke off Worboise, feeling for his pocket-handkerchief. "Lovers partin' like that — and the beautiful language. . . . Did she ever use language like that to you, Hugh?"

"Why the — why should she?" I said irritably. "She's not going to be a nun, and go off into a convent by mistake; not much."

"I mean them sweet things about 'earts never waxin' cold, an' such like," said Worboise, wiping his eyes unashamedly. "It's lovely writin': it fair —"

"Taubada, two fellow sailor belong *Merrie England* he come," interrupted Garia, who was strapping up my steel trunk on the veranda.

"Are you sending your things to-night?" asked Worboise, dropping down from the clouds. "Let me go and see to them for you; I'll get them stowed convenient — and I'd like to do what I can for you at the last, boy, even if it ain't much."

It sounded more like an offer to help with funeral, than with wedding arrangements; however, I accepted it gratefully, for I was thirsting to be alone. Worboise and the sailors went off down the track with my modest luggage, and I left the house, and tramped

away down the shore in the moonlight, breathing freely at last.

It was growing late when I came back, but I found Worboise still away — at the hotel, I had no doubt, drinking my health not wisely but too well. Garia was on the veranda, thoughtfully licking powdered lime off the spatula of his betel-chewing outfit.

"You can go home now," I said.

"I go, Taubada," he answered, slinging back the decorated gourd, with its boar-tusk stopper, and pausing on the edge of the veranda. "Taubada —"

"Well?"

"To-morrow, you marry Misi Sefania?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

Garia's eyes sparkled with interest.

"How mut' you pay for him?"

"All I've got, Garia."

"E — e, Taubada, I think you pay too mut'. Flenty gold you got, flenty frying-pan, close, boot, tin-meat, cartridge — too mut' for pay one girl."

"But I'm not paying in frying-pans and boots, Garia, I'm paying in something else."

"What you pay?"

"I pay thing I call heart, and she pay all same."

"I no savvy that-fellow talk. Misi Sefania, he got-tum heart?"

"Yes, and she gives it to me."

"All same big you giving?"

"Oh, I don't know — don't worry," I said. The conversation had begun to irritate me: I thought I had better get in and try for some sleep.

"There, go," I said. "Go home to Tararua, and turn up early in the morning." And I went in.

"All same big. . . ." The words haunted me. O Stephanie, further removed from me now than the stars from the lonely earth — Stephanie, dainty Dresdan china lady of a dream — was the pretty "pâte tendre" heart you gave to me in truth "all same big" as the red, warm, living heart I gave to you?

. . . . . .

"There she is!"

Something climbed up into my throat with a lump, and I felt my breath begin to go faster. It was going fast enough already. I had been standing beside the draped kitchen table that represented an altar, in the tiny Mission Church, for full fifteen minutes, under a raking fire of eyes from every white, and most of the half-castes, in Port Moresby; and nerves which I had never suspected myself to possess were quivering into disagreeable activity. The little box of a building — scarce larger than a suburban drawing-room — was decorated with stiflingly sweet garlands of frangipanni. The sky outside was hard and fiercely blue. It was one of New Guinea's "diamond days," when everything scintillates and stares, and the sun-rays strike like a blow. . . . Hot? I loosened my torturing collar for the twentieth time, and helplessly regarded the collapsing freshness of my best white suit. The stephanotis in my buttonhole, plucked from the veranda but an hour before, was drooping like a melted wax candle. Entrican, the missionary, standing close at hand, seemed almost ready to faint

beneath the weight of his black clerical suit, and handkerchiefs were hard at work mopping crimson faces, all over the church.

If any reminiscence crossed my mind of another wedding-day only a year or two ago, when Chalmers, at that time in charge, had married me in his own parlor to a black Papuan bride, I put it away easily enough. That was done with — done with — buried deep beneath fifty fathom of coral seas, it and all its consequences. As for calling it a marriage — why, in the sight of heaven (if there be a heaven) it was no marriage at all, whatever earthly laws might say. This, and this only, was my true marriage day.

Every head was turned to the door. A susurrus of whispers ran through the church as a breaking wave runs along a beach. The natives outside began to cackle excitedly. . . . She was coming.

Stephanie, Stephanie, lost star of my life, if ever bride looked like an angel new-fallen from the sky, so you looked, entering under the arch of frangipanni blossom that day — your sweet face spirit-pale beneath floating mist of white, your dark silk eyelashes lying low on the delicate cheek; your cloud-like, wing-like dress floating to right and left as you moved; in those little, little hands of yours the cluster of white bush-lilies I had sent you. . . . O, what was I, to deserve

"So pure a thing, so free from mortal taint!"

Her father was with her, but I saw no more of him than a gray-and-white blur somewhere in Stephanie's

neighborhood. I did not see the crowd now, nor the missionary, nor the altar, nor the fierce blue sky that burned at the windows, nor the gray-green, wandering fingers of the eucalyptus trees outside. I saw only one thing, and that was the face of Stephanie — my Stephanie, at last.

The service began. The Governor gave his daughter away without any sign of emotion, but his eye was fixed on me as he spoke, and I read somewhat of a threat in it.

"No fear, gray man!" I thought. "You could not be harder on me than I should be on myself, if I brought the shadow of a shade of a grief on a hair of her head. . . ."

. . . The ring? It was ready. No best man, no bridesmaid, was at this marriage, but none was needed. It was I myself who slipped the glove off the little hand at the right moment — how cold those delicate fingers were, for all the heat of the day! — and I who took the bouquet quietly away, and laid it down on the table. Whatever I had been before, I was not nervous now.

We knelt together; it was over, all but the blessing. My little bride had been trembling so that I almost feared she would faint, all through the ceremony, and if her father and myself and the missionary heard the timid responses that barely moved her lips, certainly no one else did. But she was calm and quiet now — the attitude of prayer had lifted her pure heart to heaven, from which it was never far away, and the words of blessing seemed to fall like dew

upon her soul. I, seeing and hearing nothing in the ceremony but a pursy black-coated parson reciting antiquated mummeries for a certain number of pounds, could yet read her mind clearly enough to follow its workings, and if a man's soul can laugh and cry together, mine assuredly did.

"At the thought of those enchantments cold,
And (Stephanie) asleep in lap of legends old."

Well, she should always have her legends, as many and as old as she liked — I was not marrying her to deny her anything she fancied.

We rose, and turned to walk down the tiny aisle together. Port Moresby had lifted its head from the book-rests, and abandoned its colorable imitation of kneeling, and was sitting up, staring like one man. Worboise, in the front seat, looking horribly fat in a borrowed khaki suit much too small for him, was wiping his eyes and nose with a purple "trade" pocket-handkerchief, and sniffing more than was necessary. The odor of the flowers was stifling; I shall never smell frangipanni again without seeing it all — the white coats and red faces, the bare brown wooden walls, the pattern of the pandanus mats on the floor, the narrow arch of the doorway, giving on the palms and the pink oleanders, and the green and blue of the sea . . . the sea, where very far away one tiny, white seed-pearl of evil gleamed out, just as we left the church.

"Do you see the little sail?" was the first thing Stephanie said.

"Yes, darling, I see it," I answered. "A fair wind and a prosperous voyage, for her and us! Let's hope it's a good omen."

"But it's not a fair wind for her, with that north-wester; you should choose your omens better, Hugh."

"Neither it is," I said carelessly, "I withdraw the comparison; she won't be in port for another two hours, and we're in port now, aren't we?"

"Yes. . . . What is she, I wonder?" asked my bride, pausing on her way down the narrow coral path to the buggy that was waiting below.

"Some trading cutter, I suppose. Look out for your skirt on those thorns, dearest, and come along; the sun's risky without a hat. . . . In with you; I'll pull up the hood. I suppose the others will walk."

"Why, of course!" said Stephanie, bubbling over with laughter. "You know as well as I do, that this is the only wheeled vehicle in New Guinea!"

Nothing could have been quieter than the breakfast — only the Governor, Stephanie and myself, Worboise, the missionary, and some dozen officials and traders, were present, waited on by Garia and the houseboys. Carolan was not among the guests; he had left Port Moresby some weeks earlier, to try cases at the East End, and had not returned.

The Governor made a short, stilted speech of the most conventional kind; I answered in half-a-dozen sentences, being, like Mr. Sleary of the horse-riding, "not much of a cackler" at any time. I knew that Worboise would make a speech, and trembled at the thought; however, it was by no means so bad as I

had feared, when it came. The good old fellow began with a rather absurd panegyric of myself, which, to my utter astonishment, brought forth loudly assenting claps and stamps from the other men. . . . So I had "builded better than I knew," in Papua, and they really liked me, after all!

I feared the inevitable anthropophagic anecdote would thrust its head up by and by; but luckily, champagne and emotion overcame my mate before he got so far, and he collapsed into his seat, on the very apex of a touching description of Stephanie's beauties and virtues, delivered with infinite feeling, and without a single h. After which, we all fell to upon the fresh turtle soup, and fatted fowls, and the tarts and blanc manges, and the roast hind-quarters of wallaby, and the giant Gaura pigeons, one each to a pie, and the mango salad and stewed paw-paws, and all the other delicacies provided by His Excellency's native cook.

When the festivities began to languish, Stephanie disappeared with Tararua, and came back before very long in the prettiest of cotton traveling dresses — blue, or pink, or red, or some color of that kind — trimmed with things, and hung with things, and looking very nice. She had a hat, too, with other things on it, and a parasol, and Tararua was carrying her dressing-bag. It was clear that the time had come.

In effect, there was Ogi, the coxswain of the whale-boat crew, standing on the threshold, his immense head wreathed with a perfect garden of ferns and flowers, and his muscular brown limbs all braceleted

and ankleted with colored leaves. Behind him, the blue sea burned, empty and still, save for the white hull of the *Merrie England* lying long and low at her anchorage, out in the bay, and the Governor's boat, with its awning up, clinging to the jetty inshore. The little seed-pearl of the distant sail was no more to be seen.

They drank our health again, and they cheered us, and they pelted Stephanie and me with all the flowers from the table, as we passed down the narrow steps of the veranda, out into the fierce gold sun. The Governor came with us to the boat; the wedding guests remained, and hung over the veranda rails, shouting, waving hats and handkerchiefs, hurraying, until we were below the slope on the hill. My last sight of the house was a vision of white flapping sleeves and crimsoned faces, crowding the rail till it looked like the side of a ship leaving port, and the last I heard was a confused chorus of "Auld Lang Syne," "He's a Jolly Good Fellow," "Good Luck! Good Luck! Hurray!" all overtopped by Worboise's bloodhound bellow—"Goad bless you! Goad bless you! Goad-by!"

The Governor tripped beside us, neater, cooler, more dry and chiplike than ever, and I read in the very set of his helmet that he connected these unseemly demonstrations directly and disgustedly with myself. . . .

. . . Down the hill we went, beneath the memorable rubber tree, along the bit of flat where the bananas waved their huge green flags in the gathering

breeze, through the grove of dry, rattling palms, over the black swamp, where the little skip-fish jumped nervously out of the water at our approach, and leaped away along the land — out on to the coral stone jetty, where the banded sea-snakes used to creep and bask in the hot hours of afternoon — to the end of the pier, and the damp-green wooden stairs, and the boat — the boat at last! God, but I was glad! Was there ever a bridegroom yet who did not in his heart regard the wedding mummeries and the wedding festivities, from beginning to end, merely as the price extorted for his bride by the tyrannical deities of Societies and Custom? A price that has to be paid, but is seldom paid willingly — never with enjoyment.

With her white cushions and awnings, and her gay decorations of flags, the whaleboat made a bright patch of color, and she looked all the gayer when Stephanie's pretty figure was settled in the stern-sheets, overflowing the cushions with such a complication of draperies that there seemed to be very little room left for me — though indeed, that was a circumstance with which I was not likely to quarrel.

There had been a close, clinging embrace between the father and the daughter, on the pier; the Governor had turned as yellow-white as the faded palm-fronds drifting out with the tide, but had not given way by so much as a quiver of his war-worn, sea-beaten features. Stephanie had clung and sobbed and choked a little, and then broken away and stepped into the boat, smiling as women can smile when their hearts are near to breaking. . . . I handed in my

bride, sprang up the steps again to wring the Governor's unresponsive hand, sprang down and into my seat, and cried "Shove off" to the crew. . . . The sea breeze freshened as we shot beyond the pier; the Governor's straight stiff form grew smaller and smaller. A long way out, we could see it still, standing there alone.

. . . . . .

When I open my eyes, in the darkness of those long nights, I can see the *Merrie England* and all on board her, the sea, the hills, the town beyond, as clearly as I saw them on that ill-fated day itself. . . . I shall see them so, in the daytime and the night, till the greater darkness shuts my eyes forever.

. . . . . .

A picture painted in gems and fire, was the ship that afternoon. The blinding sparkle of the sea shone back from her brass fittings, all brightened up with gold; from the new clean varnish of the bulwarks, the great sash windows of the deck-houses, and the smaller circles of the ports. Not even the colors of the sky and sea and land, on that gorgeous day, equaled the glow of the masses of flowers that had been stacked and twined about hatchways, gratings, ratlines and rails. The decks and awnings were white as coral from the reef. Sparks of fire shot from the gilded buttons and stripes of the officers' snowy uniforms; the A. B.'s were in blue suits; the native firemen and deck-hands in brilliant cotton kilts and flowery wreaths. Below the hull, the grass-green water surged and swung, and high above, a cloud of

flags, blue, yellow, white and red, was slatting and straining in the rising breeze.

"Wind getting up, Captain," I remarked, as that official handed Stephanie gallantly up the accommodation ladder, I holding her skirts for her.

"Aye, but it's changed; we'll have it aft, and she'll run fairly steady. Not that Mrs. Lynch cares about that; she's a very fair sailor," smiled the captain.

"Not the wind one would expect at this time of the year."

"No — no — but there's no depending on anything, about the break of the seasons. Yon little cutter must have had to beat all the way up the coast, though she's got a slant now."

So she had; the little seed-pearl of the horizon had reappeared from behind an outlying island, and was now plain to be seen as a cutter of some ten or twelve tons, hurrying portward as fast as sail could carry her. The wind was blowing strong from the southeast, and a bank of cloud was rising over the Astrolabe.

"With your leave, sir, we'll up anchor now," said the captain, beckoning to the mate. "I'd as soon clear the coast before dark; we find new reefs here every trip."

The donkey-engine was got to work at once, and, amid a hideous clattering and clanging, the chains began to rise through the hawse-pipes. While we were getting under way, Stephanie, gay as a child, insisted on leading me by the hand all over the ship, showing me the Governor's and secretaries' cabins on

deck; the dining-saloon below, with its smart white and gold bulkheads, and its gay mirrors and carpeting, oddly set off by the grim rack of rifles running right across the forward end; the high-up bridge deck, best place in the world for lounging and looking about you; the low, cool promenade deck; the pretty cabin reserved for us,— a real little sea boudoir, with pier-glass and arm-chairs and a bookcase, and three bright ports looking out upon the tumbling waves, above the standing bed-place. In and out of every corner of the ship went Stephanie's flying skirts, and after her went I, for the moment as young as herself, ready to laugh at nothing, eager to race her up and down the alley-ways and companions — snatching a stray kiss behind a door, pinioning and imprisoning my bride in a china-closet, and being punished by blows like the pecks of a little angry bird, when she succeeded in freeing herself by an unsuspected exit at the other side. . . . And all the time, the donkey-engine clattered, and the anchor-chains rattled and roared, and the rising sea struck soft white hands upon the ports outside. . . . It was going to be a stormy night.

In a last wild rush up the main companion — I chasing Stephanie to pay her out for her latest impertinence, she flying before me, breathless with mischief and laughter — the roaring of the chains ceased, and we heard the stentorian voice of the mate sing out — "Come up from below, sir."

"We're off!" cried Stephanie, standing still.

"We shall be in a minute," said I. A sudden quiet

fell upon our romp. I think we both felt older: I know we looked at one another with changed faces. Here and now we felt the new strange life began, with the severance from wild, cruel New Guinea, where first our destinies had met and touched — whence came the fate that had sent us out upon these seas, together.

The sharp ting of the engine-room bell broke into the silence.

"Stand by — half speed — full speed ahead," translated I. "Now we're away."

"Let's go on deck," said Stephanie, as the companion trembled to the full beat of the screw.

The green and purple hills of Port Moresby were already changing shape; the reaches of the bay were unfolding. Behind the *Merrie England* a long white wake began to show. The steamer pitched a little on the incoming swell as we headed out. I put my arm round Stephanie's waist to steady her, and my bride nestled her head close to my shoulder, and leaned against me, sighing with content.

Filled to the brim, and lifted to my lips, the cup of existence ran over in that moment, and I who never prayed, could have found it in my heart to thank "whatever gods there be," for life, for love, and Stephanie.

At that instant, the thunderbolt fell.

. . . When the captain came up to us, with an apologetic smile, balancing himself lightly upon the pitching deck, and offering some inaudible apology for some indefinite necessity — when the boatswain

and the mate, hanging over the weather-rail, turned their faces from the whitening sea, and looked at us with a sudden furtive interest — I swear I knew it all. Whether it was actual second sight — whether it was simply the rapid working of a mind keyed far beyond its normal pitch by the emotions of the day — I cannot tell. But in that moment I knew, as surely as if some supernatural messenger had told me, that Carolan was returning upon his Eastern patrol upon that cutter, that he was straining every nerve to intercept the ship, and that Fate — blind Fate with a black-veiled face, and a skeleton hand — had arisen from the far recesses of the island archipelagoes to follow me, and track me down, and tear my darling from my arms.

I think I almost went mad for a second or two, but I neither moved nor spoke. . . . Then . . . I could see that the captain was still standing beside me, smiling and apologizing, and saying something about urgent signals displayed by the cutter — short time that would be occupied in stopping and communicating — possibilities — illness on board, doctor wanted from Queensland — outbreak of native troubles — and so forth, and so forth.

I was quite cool now — cool as a man fighting for his life, with the very smallest of chances to see him through. I took Stephanie to a sheltered seat, left her there, and balanced my way back to the captain.

"Why stop?" I said. "It's a nasty sea, and the cutter should have come earlier with her message, if she has any. It's rather too much, to expect us to

heave to outside the reef, and probably lose our chance of getting clear of land before dark. I've heard of the *Merrie England's* reputation before now, and I'm sailor enough, anyhow, to see that she'll nearly roll her masts out in this sea, if we have to anchor anywhere for the night — and it's a toss-up now whether we don't. Get along, Captain, and let the cutter go hang."

I spoke easily, and lit a cigar as I talked. Captain Nash looked puzzled, and the mate and boatswain stared, enjoying the dilemma.

"Well, really, sir," said the captain, after a glance to windward. "I don't know that I'm justified in keeping on. That's one of the Government cutters — the *Kapa-Kapa* — and Mr. Carolan, the Chief Magistrate, will be in her, I think. She's signaling 'Wish to communicate, urgent, heave to.' It's —"

"I know the signals as well as you do," I said impatiently, "but I see no reason for stopping. No doubt the people on the cutter think His Excellency is on board, and want to speak to him. They'll find out when they get to port that this isn't a Government trip. Hang it all, Captain, what can they want with us? Keep all on, and let them go to — Jericho — with their signals."

All this time, the rising wind shrilled in the rigging, and the screw beat steadily. A monstrous bat-winged lakatoi, laden with sago from the Gulf, swept past us on her way to port, her decks aswarm with wild brown, naked men, crowding to gape at the steamer. And out to windward, against our poor nine knots, the cutter almost held her own.

For a moment, the captain's slack smooth countenance seemed to waver, and my soul swung plummet-wise over dark abysses of agony, in the sickening up-and-down that men call "suspense." Then his face set harder. The plummet sank.

I caught him up before he could speak.

"Come into your cabin!" I said; and though he was master there, he obeyed me.

It was fight to a finish now, and I had no scruples left. I pulled a small box out of an inner pocket, took off the lid and spilt the contents out on the quilt of the captain's berth,— three-and-twenty good pearls, gathered through near seven years of fishing, trading, and wandering; none of them fit for the ear or hand of a queen, perhaps, but each worth a very respectable sum. I had meant them for a necklace for my bride, after we should have reached Brisbane; but it seemed that they were to be the price of my bride instead.

The captain viewed the jewels eagerly. He was a small rat-like creature, with a greedy eye.

I put them back in their box, and forced it into his hands; I stared him in the eyes as I did so, and said significantly:

"I don't want the cutter to catch us up."

If, in that rat-like countenance, I read weakness, covetousness and fear — if I played upon them one and all, and bent them to my needs — I make no excuse for it. What would another in my place have done?

The captain gulped, smiled, and closed an eager hand about the box.

"All right," he whispered. "I don't know your game, but I'm on. Come out, and I'll speak to the mate."

All this had taken but a few minutes. The cutter still swept on beneath the blackening sky. The mate and boatswain waited, leaning against the rail. Stephanie, from her chair, watched us without much interest. There was nothing exciting to her in the appearance of a belated Government cutter that wanted to talk. Officials always wanted to talk, in her experience.

Captain Nash marched up to the mate, with a blustering expression.

"Keep all on," he said. "We can't be stopped by every — hooker that wants to change the time of day with us!"

"What!" said the mate, disrespectfully.

"I gave you your orders, Mr. Blake," snapped the captain. All British New Guinea knew that no love was lost between these two — the mate, an old Royal Navy man, ambitious, fairly well educated, and eager to rise: ready at any time to catch his superior tripping — the captain, weak, ignorant, boastful, blusterous, and holding the reins of authority with a very uncertain grip. The one was drowned off Orokolo not three weeks later — a good man lost — the other left the ship one day in Cooktown, and never returned. I have never seen their successors; they do

not (I understand) hold social intercourse with the jail.

"Am I to answer the signal — the urgent signal — displayed by that cutter, sir?" asked the mate.

"No, Mr. Blake, you are not. Am I captain here, or are you?" Captain Nash swung round theatrically, and turned to stride across the deck. His foot slipped on a wet patch of planking as he did so, and he fell full length. The box of pearls shot out of his hand, and in another instant the deck was scattered with flying, rolling specks of white, worth many a month's wage to the unlucky wretch who had dropped them. He clutched at them with a scream, but the mate stepped forward, and hauled him roughly to his feet.

"Let be!" he said. "There's work going on here I don't care about. He —" pointing to me —"gave you those in your cabin just now. I saw you come out with the box. What for? Why aren't we to heave to? This'll look well when it all comes out later on, won't it?"

"D— you!" yelled the captain, "you've been trying to oust me ever since you joined, and this is all a piece of it! Have it your own way, then — mutiny, you dog, you, and see what you'll get!" He was down on the deck again, crawling and clawing after the pearls, and really seemed half demented. Stephanie had risen from her chair, and was clinging to me in terror, not understanding, but badly frightened, at she knew not what. The boatswain, chewing tobacco, watched the scene with the calm relish of a

servant enjoying a row among his masters. Outside, the white seas roared along our swinging hull, and the black and purple coast of Papua slipped past.

"I'm not mutineer!" roared the mate. "I ask you, sir, as your chief officer, what order I'm to give the engine-room?"

The captain, evidently shaken by the discovery that had fallen on him, made no articulate answer, but held to his pearls.

"Do I understand you to say, sir, that I am to ring 'Stop'?" persisted the mate.

"Ring her to hell if you like!" howled Nash, and slammed himself into his cabin.

The mate went at once to the bridge-ladder, and as he mounted, I loosened Stephanie's clinging arms, and put her in her chair, with a word or two of assurance. Before the officer had reached the telegraph, I was on the bridge-deck beside him. I suppose I looked ugly. I know I felt like murder.

"If you ring," I said, "I'll heave your rotten carcase over the side, and the sharks won't wait for a boat to be lowered."

He fixed a pair of gooseberry eyes on me.

"I'm seein' this through," he said. "Heave me over if you like, but I ask you to ask yourself, what good that's going to do you."

My hands fell to my sides. What good indeed? Sick at heart, I sat down on a grating, and there was no more spirit left in me.

The mate took hold of the telegraph.

"Stand by! Stop!"

"Stop it is."

The engines slowed, and stopped. The *Merrie England* wallowed sickeningly on the swell. Stephanie, pale and frightened, came staggering up the companion and caught at my arm.

"Hugh, why are we stopping? What's the matter? What have they all quarreled about? Tell me!"

I took her in my arms, and clasped her as one clasps the dying, when the sands of life are almost run, and the shadow of eternal severance falls dark and very near.

"Hugh, you're shaking! Oh, I'm frightened! What is it?"

"Darling," I said, lying boldly, "it's only a dispute between the captain and the mate about stopping for the cutter; you've nothing to be afraid of. Go down to your cabin, and stay there for a little: they may use rough language, and in any case you're better off the deck, with all this spray flying."

I do not think she was quite deceived, for her eyes asked questions that I could not answer; but she turned away silently, and crept down the companion, held up by my arm. I took her to her berth and left her lying there, wedged in with pillows for steadiness; the ship was rolling very badly now.

Then I returned to the deck.

The cutter had been doing near as much as ourselves (the *Merrie England* is by no means an ocean grayhound) and was now overhauling us rapidly. The mate was inspecting our pursuer through a glass; he handed it to me, silently, as I came up. I steadied

myself against the water-tank, and looked. Carolan's figure, hauling hard on a sheet, leapt into sudden clearness inside the ring of the lens. His police, in their blue and red tunics, were squatting about the deck of the cutter, holding on to the weather-gunwale as the boat heeled over to the wind. There seemed to be about a dozen of them.

"You see I was right," said the mate. He had dropped the "sir" now, and was casting suspicious glances at me out of his gooseberry eyes. Plainly, he did not like the way things had been going. Captain Nash remained in his cabin, with the door shut.

In a very few minutes the *Kapa-Kapa* was right alongside us, recklessly braving the ugly chop of our pitching bows. The line thrown out by the mate was smartly caught by a constable. Carolan seized the Jacob's ladder as the cutter swung past, and clambered on deck with some difficulty — a damp, bedraggled figure, hair on end, face unshaved, duck clothing dirty and wet — the very ghost of the trim official that Port Moresby knew. His face was gray and mottled as the back of a lizard; his eyes burned black and fierce at the bottom of two dark caverns. He was a full stone lighter than on the day I had met him under the rubber-tree — the day on which I had mocked and triumphed over him. . . . Today, it was his turn.

He came up to me where I stood in the middle of the deck. The pitching of the ship made him stagger, and he almost flung himself upon me, as he reached out to touch my arm.

"Lynch," he said — and there was something like a rim of foam about his lips as he spoke —"I arrest you for the murder of Herbert Sanderson, in Rossel Island, last April year."

The mate whistled shrilly.

"Oho!" said he. "So that's the milk of the cocoanut?"

The boatswain, glued to the bulwark, chewed like a machine, and stared hard, lest he should miss a movement or a word. From the cutter below, the shock-headed native police were climbing one by one to the deck, every man with his rifle over his shoulder, and his bandolier across his naked chest. Evidently, Carolan meant to take no chances. I did not move from where I stood, but I cursed Carolan — once. I should not care to write what I said.

The mate looked at me with interest. The captain peered out of his half-opened port (whence, no doubt, he had heard everything) and drew back his head. The police grounded their arms on deck, leaned upon their rifles, and fixed their brown-china eyes on me.

Carolan cleared his throat, and put on his official manner.

"Well?" he said, jingling something in his pocket.

"I — I wouldn't, sir, if I was you," warned the mate, in an audible aside. "I know his sort; they go 'kava-kava' right away, if you tie 'em up. Ask him if he'll go quiet, sir, do. Blame me," he added, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand embarrassedly, "if I'm not more than half sorry for the poor devil — and he a sailor-man himself and all."

"Lynch, if I don't handcuff you, will you return quietly?" asked the Chief Magistrate.

I did not speak, because I could not. I took a turn across the deck, and snatched at a water-bottle I saw standing in one of the deck cabins. My mouth and throat were as dry and burning as the furnaces of the ship. I tossed half the water down, and faced Carolan again.

"I did it," I said. "I'd do it again to-morrow — and I'd kill you here on the deck with my bare hands — only — only for —"

I broke off and cursed him again. The captain's face, very pale, showed like an apparition behind the glass of his port; he had screwed it tight, and his door was shut. The police drew together like a bunch of frightened beasts, and fingered the locks of their Winchesters.

"Yes, I know you'd serve me as you served poor Sanderson, if you dared," said Carolan, keeping his ground and his temper as if he had been in his own court-house ashore. "I know that — but even you wouldn't do murder again — with her on board."

"If you lay your lips to the name of my wife —" I began.

The mate stepped forward, and put his hand on Carolan's arm.

"Sir, they were married this morning — did you know?" he asked. And those green eyes of his looked at me almost pitifully.

There was no pity in Carolan's face: he glowed

like an Elizabethan true believer haling a discovered priest to the hanging and quartering.

"I heard the wedding was fixed for this week, of course," he said, "and when I saw the *Merrie England* under steam, I knew it had taken place. . . . I've scarcely slept or eaten for a week, trying to get that cursed cutter up the coast in time. It was chance took me down to Rossel — a row among the natives — but something I heard there set me at work, and I got it all clear in a few days. . . . If you don't hang for what you've done, Hugh Lynch, there's no law or justice in a British Crown Colony. Now are you coming quietly, or are you not?"

There was not much law, or justice either, about his method of making the arrest; but I did not care to quarrel over trifles that could make no difference in the end.

Before I could answer, the mate intervened again.

"Sir, if we've got to go back to port, we might as well get her under way again, and tow the cutter," he said. It seemed to me that he was trying to save me from the necessity of speaking.

"Where's the captain?" demanded Carolan.

"He's in his cabin . . . sick," grinned the mate, rolling over to Nash's door. He knocked till it was opened, and then went in. What he said to the captain I do not know, nor did I ever care to ask. In truth, I never saw Nash, or the necklace, again.

The mate came out, went on the bridge, and rang the telegraph. The screw began to beat; the ship tore up the waves as she turned. In another minute she

had swung round upon her former track, and was pitching through the seas to Port Moresby.

We got into still water in about half-an-hour, and opposite the pier, the engines were stopped, and the anchor chains roared down. I had been hoping against hope that Stephanie might stay in her cabin until I had been taken away, so that she might be spared as much as possible; but the letting go of the anchor roused her from the troubled sleep into which she had fallen, and she came on deck.

I saw her catch at the rigging, and almost fall, as she caught sight of the crowd collected there — the twelve police grouped close about me, Carolan's haggard figure keeping guard, the mate shouting orders to the sailors in the bow, and the captain nowhere visible.

"Hugh!" she said, with almost a shriek. "Mr. Carolan! Oh, what has happened?"

I sat down on the skylight, and buried my head in my hands, for I could not look at her. All my strength seemed turned to water at the sight of her face — hers, upon whom I had brought a sorrow worse than death. I heard Carolan speaking, and then a scream from Stephanie tore the air.

"Liar!" she cried, and her feet flew across the deck. Her arms were around me, her fingers tearing away my hands from my face.

"Hugh! he's telling lies — he says you are a murderer — look at me, darling, I don't believe him — I wouldn't if he was dying — you never did it! Hugh, speak to me — I believe you before all the world!"

I looked up, and she turned gray — gray as the dusk now falling fast on sea and town.

"I killed him," I said.

"You — killed him —" she said, with glassy eyes. "Will they — kill — you?"

"I hope so," I answered her, and dropped my head in my hands again.

. . . . . .

When I looked up, Stephanie was gone.

A brown woman stood before me, a woman decked in beads and feathers — Tararua. The Governor's boat was lying alongside the ship — empty, save for the crew. Carolan was sitting on the bulwark by the accommodation ladder, guarding the opening with his police.

"Where is she?" I asked. I was past all surprise — past feeling, mercifully, for the moment.

"Misi Sefania he stop 'long cabin," answered Tararua. "Misi Sefania he cly flenty. Govana he been come, he stop, 'long Misi Sefania."

"Ask her to come and see me — before I go," I said.

There was another interval, I do not know how long. Then Tararua was standing before me again, and I heard her say —

"Misi Sefania, he tell 'Good-by.'"

. . . . . .

I "went quietly." The police boat came alongside, and Carolan and I and the twelve constables got into it. The night falls quickly in New Guinea; there was scarce a spark of the orange after-glow remain-

ing in the west, as we tramped across the flat to the jail. The wind thrashed fiercely among the palms, and tore the blossoms from the oleanders, flinging them down upon the track, as if in mockery of the flower-strewn path that Stephanie and I had trodden together, that morning — only that morning, when the sun was in the heavens, and love and life and happiness were mine. Now it was night, and the stars had fallen from the sky, and I was in the dark — alone.

. . . . . .

I might write a good deal about the trial, but I do not care to. I have grown tired — tired of writing, tired of remembering, tired almost, of living. What does it matter, in the end?

"What is it all but a trouble of ants, in the gleam of a million, million suns?"

A hundred years hence, it will not matter to anyone that Stephanie and I once lived, loved, parted and died. There'll be a grave in an English cemetery, a grave with marble and ironwork that cost someone money to put up, before it rotted and crumbled away: there'll be a pinch of fat earth under the fathom-deep leaf-mold of the ten thousand foot ranges, or a handful of phosphate at the bottom of the coral seas, that once was I . . . instead of a double headstone in the swampy Port Moresby graveyard, with two sets of bones beneath it gone back to earth side by side, as there would have been, if . . .

That will be all the difference — then.

. . . . . .

I believe the trial was fair enough, according to the peculiar laws of British New Guinea. There were plenty of witnesses — the Resident Magistrate from Nivani Island, who had seen Sanderson's schooner go by on its way to Rossel, and had afterwards seen myself, and given me directions about Horakiraki Passage — a couple of Rossel natives who had drifted down to Nivani in a canoe, driven there by a storm, and told the story of the white men's fight — five of the guides who had accompanied me through the forest, and — Garia.

Yes, Garia was in it, and an important witness too. The mind of the Papuan native is almost the mind of a child; my servant could scarcely have been made to understand — even had anyone tried — that his boastful account of my prowess in hunting down Sanderson was likely to do me a mischief. He told all he could readily and fluently and — though he never knew it — drove not a few good nails into the coffin of my dying freedom.

I refused to plead; indeed, I do not think I spoke at all during the trial. Carolan, in discharge of his office as Chief Magistrate, tried me, without a jury, after the preliminary hearing by the Resident Magistrate of Port Moresby. That is the law of the colony: I do not say that it is a good law, or that the proposed alterations will not be for the better; but I have, personally, no just cause for complaint.

Carolan was quite prepared to hang me, I think, and would not have been sorry for the necessity — his judicial horror over my killing of the man who

took my girl from me, seemed to be kept in a sort of water-tight compartment, quite unconnected with his strong personal desire to kill me for an exactly similar reason.

But the magisterial inquiry turned somewhat in my favor, and so did the native evidence, during the trial itself. I could have wished that the real facts of the fight in the glen had been made a little clearer; as it was, Carolan, in his address before passing sentence, saw fit to charge me with meanness and treachery, in "hunting down an unarmed man by means of a superior force," and obliging him to fight me. My strength, he was pleased to say, made a fight between myself and any ordinary man a mere murder under another name; the intent to kill had been plainly proved, and nothing but the want of clearness in the interpreted evidence as to who struck the first blow, prevented his passing a sentence that would, once for all, put an end to lawless violence among the whites of the Territory. As it was, he did not feel justified in treating the case otherwise than as manslaughter, or in passing sentence of more than four years imprisonment, to be served in Port Moresby jail. He hoped that even this comparatively light punishment might have some effect on the deplorably lawless spirit that he had long been pained to observe was prevalent in British New Guinea.

Well — to give him justice, he might have done worse. I had killed Sanderson of set design, and he knew it. A little stretching of the evidence — a little intimidating of the wild Rossel islanders who were

terrified nearly sick by their strange surroundings and ready to say almost anything put into their mouths,— a little more stress laid on the half-spoken acknowledgment I had made to Garia of my intentions — and the knot that tangled all our lives would have been shorn through once for all.

Carolan, I say, could have done this, and done it without, in real truth, defeating the ultimate ends of justice, as it is understood by popular opinion. But he did not. With all he valued on earth as the prize of a very little chicanery — with Stephanie herself in the balance (for he must have had hopes, had I been out of the way) he still held the balance fairly, and flung the British Constitution, nothing less, into the scale that weighed against him. Professional honor, tried by this fearful test, held fast. I shall not cease to hate him till the grave closes over us both — but ever since then, I have respected Carolan.

The trial lasted three days, and the tin match-box they call a Court-House was packed with almost every soul in Port Moresby, all the while. It is curious, but true, that I did not suffer much during that time. The ceaseless fire of staring eyes, the interminable question and answer, interpreting and re-interpreting, of the evidence, seemed to hynotize me into a kind of stupor, and I sat hour after hour in my corner, looking at my great weather-browned hands lying on my knees, or watching the flicker of the slim shadeless eucalyptus foliage against the flare of the sky, scarcely conscious of what was going on. I think that half-hour of unspeakable agony on board the *Merrie Eng-*

land had broken some nerve of suffering. It may not be good physiology, but it is good fact, to say that something "gives" in hours like those, as often as not, and that life and reason may be saved by the deadness that follows — for a time. Afterwards, the torturers may be let loose in good earnest, and on the shrinking soul may be laid, as on cowering bodies in the days of the "peine forte et dure"—"as much iron . . . as it can bear — *and more.*" But of that — since I do not wish to go mad through mere remembrance — I shall not write.

As I have said, I felt little at the trial. I remember that the wild mint smelt fresh and pungent all day outside the windows, and that as the afternoon wore on, a hot sweet odor of sandalwood used to rise up from the steamer-jetty, where they were loading ships with the brown scented logs won by wandering traders in the depths of unknown forests, and on the banks of unexplored great streams. I remember how the orange-breasted honey-bird used to hang about the red blooms of the hibiscus that grew near the door — diving and skimming, dipping and fluttering close to the lintel, in their happy flights — the wild free wandering creatures, whom no man caged or held. I remember the atmosphere of hot humanity in the Court-House, and the whispering and fidgeting, and the shuffling of feet, as one man after another from time to time rose and slipped out, down the hill, through the mint and the yellow-pink lantana, and the fallen hibiscus bells lying in the powdery scarlet dust, to the iron-built "hotel" on the flat, for a drink.

. . . Carolan let me smoke, and I smoked almost all day long, heavy stupefying trade tobacco. It helped me to pass the time, and that was all I cared for. Whether they hanged me or not, mattered extremely little to me, but it did seem to matter that they should get the thing over one way or another, as soon as might be.

The Governor came every day, and sat close to Carolan, a silent, wooden, watchful figure. There was more white in the gray of his hair than there had been a few weeks before, and the two straight lines on either side of his mouth were cut deeper, but his face, on the whole, told little of what he felt.

He spoke to me once only, on the last day of the trial, when my sentence had been pronounced, and the jailer was waiting to take me away. Then he came up to me, looking frail and old, and addressed me in what was evidently a prepared speech. I don't remember all he said, but it was in general, to the effect that Stephanie desired never to hear of me again, that she had been ill, but was getting better, and that he (the Governor) had only been waiting the end of the trial to take her down to Queensland at once. As soon as the cable could set him free, he said, he would resign his post, and start for England, taking his daughter with him.

"And if there's law in the British Empire," he added, his voice shaking a little, "I'll have her freed from you."

"Don't buoy yourself up with false hopes, sir," began Carolan; but the Governor interrupted him.

"I must hope, Carolan! There will be ways — there must be — all the interest the family has got — Lord Lillaby —"

"Well!" said Carolan, and walked away, shrugging his shoulders. My father-in-law was about to leave, having said his say; but I stopped him.

"Sir," I said, "you have spoken; now, it's my turn. I killed Sanderson; everyone knows that. I'm not sorry for it: but I never expected your daughter to understand, and — I'd have kept it from her all her life, if I could. I didn't suppose, either, at the time, that I was putting myself in peril of what has happened — there was no law to speak of in the old days here — but if I'd known that this was really hanging over me, I'd have put a bullet through my head before I'd have dared to look at her."

I stopped a moment; it was hard to speak. Wilks waited. The Governor waited. The honey-birds fluttered and twittered in the doorway against the blue: the hot wind beat in the eucalyptus trees.

"I want you to believe," I went on, "that I'd free her, now, if I could. You may do anything you wish; I'll not oppose you, and I'll never — try — to see her again —"

I had to stop a second time.

"I have a message," I said presently, speaking with some difficulty now, for I seemed strangely short of breath. "Will you give it to her?"

"It will make no difference, I warn you," said the Governor, coldly.

"It's not meant to," said I. "You will tell her

this, if you please, from her husband — She vowed, before the altar of the God she believes in, to keep to me for better or worse, till death. The worst came, and she failed me. She may have been right according to her lights and yours — I don't know — but I shall not forgive her — living — or dead — or in the hereafter, if there is one. Tell her that — and go."

I do not know how he went, for the red fit was on me, and for the moment I could scarcely breathe or see. When I came to myself, I was alone with the jailer. I stretched out my wrists for the handcuffs, without a word, and went away.

. . . . . .

I can write no more.

PART II

STEPHANIE'S STORY

CHAPTER XII

IF I had not gone into the church, that spring afternoon, it would never have happened.

Spring-time is so hard, when you are unhappy. It was spring just then; the parks were green, and there were lilac-buds peeping out between the bars of the squares. I used to wonder, walking under the sweet bunches of the blossom, how many people hated them in spite of all their beauty — as I did. You may forget about miserable things more or less, in the summer and the winter; but in the spring, when you see the green leaves breaking out again, and the laburnum turning gold again, and the lilac buds coming out — again — while you are still, still unhappy — you hate the innocent flowers so much that you could break them down and trample on them. I can't explain: I am not clever — but I know it to be true.

That afternoon, the lilacs were just beginning to bud; I saw them pushing their tiny pale points of blossom up through the leaves as I walked across Haviland Square; and if every point had been a needle, and every needle turned against my heart, they could not have hurt me more.

It was the tenth spring since the days of my trouble, and I wondered, that day, if the old pain was going to come back again every spring, for thirty or forty years more, or whether it would wear me out sooner. I hoped it would.

No one, of course, is unhappy all the time. Since I spoiled my life for good, long ago in New Guinea, I had had quite a fair share of happy days — when I was taking care of my dear father, in the years before he died; when I was traveling with my aunt, Lady Lillaby, on the Continent, and seeing many wonderful and beautiful sights (though nothing, I think, as beautiful as the land I had left forever) — when I was ill, most of all, as I was once, and could not think or trouble about anything. That was happiness,— or peace. I suppose they are the same.

Many of my happy days had been given me by Walter, who followed us to England, and settled down to practice at the Bar, and who was always, always kind. . . . Poor Walter! when I thought how his life had been spoiled (for I knew he had remained unmarried because of me) it hurt me worse than my own loneliness. He had done everything for me that a true friend could do. He kept the whole miserable story out of the papers, home and colonial,— how, I do not know, but I was most thankful, for it saved me from talk that I could not have endured. Papa, besides, had such hopes of getting me set free, that he would not allow me to use any name but Hammond. And when he found, after consulting ever so many London lawyers, that there was not the least hope of

breaking the marriage, it seemed too late to begin explanations. For myself, I did not care. I nearly went mad with wretchedness during that long voyage home (the passengers thought I was broken down with New Guinea fever, and as I really had had an attack, I let them think so) — and for months and months I only wanted to be let die.

I used to kneel against my bed at night, trying to say my prayers, but all I could say was —"I have got to live — oh, I have got to live!" And I could not even fall into a decline, as they do in books. I grew thin and nervous, and lost some of my looks, but I was able to dress and dance, and go to parties, just as I had done two years before, when I had never seen New Guinea, or got my heart broken. My aunt, Lady Lillaby, Walter, and Papa, were the only people who knew, and they all insisted on my going out. I used to dance all night, in those years, dance myself tired, and take away the other girls' admirers, and not mind at all — I did not care for anyone else's troubles — why should other people not suffer, when I did? Then I would go home, and my maid would come up and unhook my dress, and I would begin to think of another maid, thousands of miles away — Tararua, the half-naked New Guinea girl with the red flowers in her hair, who used to bring me notes, and tell me news. . . .

When Dickenson had gone, I would drop down on the hearth-rug beside the dying ashy fire left for me to undress by, and cry myself nearly ill. And in the rain beating outside the tight-shut window-panes, and

the cold London wind roaming among black roofs and lonely spires, I would hear, again and again, those words spoken long ago under the jeweled skies of Papua, above Port Moresby Bay. . . . "I killed him." . . .

And the last, dreadful message, brought me by my father —

"I shall not forgive her, living, or dead, or in the hereafter."

Hugh had said that — Hugh, who would have been tortured to death to save me a moment's pain — once. . . . But that was the other Hugh, who existed no longer. The other was not a murderer — (as I put it to myself in those days). The other had not been married to a black. The other was just the best and bravest and most loving heart in all the world, and I would have died for him. . . .

That hanging by a broken thread, what torture it is! The Hugh who never was, disturbed me more than the Hugh who really existed. I used to find myself helplessly thinking that I would tell him how unhappy I was, and that it would all be right — he was my special providence, always able to come to my aid, and eager to do it. And then, with a horrible wrench, I would realize that it was he himself who was the trouble, and nobody, not even God, could make things as they were before. Hugh would never, never help me again.

If he had not sent that message, and if I had not gone away knowing that his love was turned to hate, I might — I might — I do not know what I might

not have done — later, when he was free, and I was older, and knew more of the world. The shock of hearing that he had killed the man who carried away his native wife, came upon me so suddenly that I had no time to think. I was only terrified. I had always felt that there was something untameable, formidable, even, in my lover — something that made other men fear him; perhaps I did not love him the less for that. But when it suddenly leaped into daylight, and showed him red with slaughter, I cowered away before it. It was the natural impulse of a young and innocent girl, whose life had been sheltered from every wind that blew. It might, as I say, have worn out with time, and given way to the passionate love I still felt for Hugh, had I only been sure that good or bad, bond or free, he cared for me.

But he hated me. He had said as much.

And Papa, and Walter, and Aunt Lillaby, all took it so much for granted that I never could wish to see him again. And I let them do as they liked, for I was heart-sick — life-sick.

I am sure we all thought that "something would happen." It seemed unbelievable that year after year would go by, and make no change, except for the death of dear Papa — that I should go to live with my aunt, and continue going out, and traveling, and reading, and hearing concerts, and seeing Walter almost every day — that I should get older and older, and less and less miserable (except in those dreadful days of spring), and that still, still, still, nothing would happen! Papa and Aunt Florence had thought the

marriage would be got rid of somehow — that it would be found illegal, or that Hugh's native wife would reappear, since he had not actually seen her drown, or that Hugh, when he was free, might at least get a separation order — which I understand he could have done, though I could not. As for Walter, I am afraid he counted on the chances of the New Guinea climate, and the unhealthiness of prison life — later, on the wild inland tribes and the dangers of the coasts — to free me. For myself, I counted on . . . I never quite cared to acknowledge what. But we were both alive, and soon, both free . . . and it was hard to believe that so much love could altogether die.

But we all counted fruitlessly, in our separate ways. Nothing happened — nothing ever happened. I was Stephanie Hammond to all my friends, Stephanie Lynch to myself, at the end of nine years, just as before. I had worn through one gold chain, and marked another, carrying a little plain ring, that no one ever saw, round my neck, under my dress. My girl friends were happily married, nearly all, and they had children, darling children — three, four, five, six of them sometimes — little boys of seven or eight, with manly, brave faces, and fine strong limbs — dear tiny girls of two and three — little babies, so soft and lovesome. . . .

. . . I don't know if my friends ever suspected why I would not play with their little ones. I do not think they did; they seemed to suppose that I did not care for children. I let them think so.

And my thirtieth birthday came and I was not a girl any more. I had not lost my looks; if I had doubted that, the little incidents that used to occur now and then, when men were stupid and would not understand, would have reassured me. But I began to feel in a way I could scarcely explain, that the world belonged to others. It does belong to girls — one takes that quite naturally, while one is still a girl; but once thirty is past, it comes with something of a shock to realize that your inheritance had, somehow or other, slipped out of your hands. . . . You don't want the world to belong to you, of course, and yet somehow, you miss it, when it does not, any more.

. . . . . .

So it came to the afternoon when the lilacs were out, and I was unhappy because of spring.

There is a church at the corner of the square: it is gray and black and ugly, but it has a shining gold cross on the spire, pointing to heaven. I saw the cross as I came up the square, and it seemed to call to me. I opened the little swing door in the middle of the big one, and went in.

It was a Catholic church. My mother was a Catholic, and I have always had a love for Catholic things and people, because of her. The church pleased me. There was a cool twilight under the great nave, and little stars of candles twinkled somewhere away at the far end. Soft muffled echoes came and went as people swung the padded doors; the scent of the sunshine and the spring would flow in for a moment through the opening, and then it would be dark and

quiet again, with the smell of cold incense in the air, and the sound of the traffic faint and far away.

Hardly anyone was about — just one or two people praying near the high altar, and a nun in a black habit kneeling in a side chapel. I saw her face as she prayed; it was not pale and ecstatically beautiful, as people draw the faces of nuns in pictures, only round and pink and commonplace, and rather plain — but it was full of peace.

Standing near her, and looking about the church (nothing was new to me, for I had often been in Catholic churches before) I was seized, all in a moment, with an indescribable weariness. To me, whose life was poisoned with unrest, that look of peace was as the gleam of water very far away, to one who lies perishing of thirst in a desert.

She rose from her knees by and by, and went over to one of the confessional boxes, her flat shoes clapping on the pavement, her veil floating back above a high ungraceful forehead and over-full round cheeks. . . . For a moment, I saw my own face as in a glass, and I knew it to be worn and bitter and unlovely beside that of the nun, though I have what men call beauty.

It seemed to me that there was only one thing in the world I could possibly do. . . . I sat down on a chair, and waited.

The nun went away, and I lifted the curtain, and knelt in her place. The priest had his ear to the lattice; I could see his wrinkled cheek and his soft white hair as I spoke.

I told him I was not a Catholic, and had not come to confess, but that I was very, very unhappy, and that I would give all the world to be a nun. And I asked him what I was to do.

He did not seem to be at all surprised. He threw a glance at me through the lattice — I saw his face then, and it seemed old and gentle, and very wise. He told me that he could not talk to me there, but that I had better come to the presbytery next day, and see him. Then he said good-by, and blessed me, and asked me to pray for him.

There is not much to tell about Father Ferrer. I met him only twice — that day and the day after. But of what he did, there is a great deal to tell, for he changed all my life.

Next day I went to the presbytery. I had to wait a little while in the parlor before he came. It was a neat little room, waxed and clean and cold, with pictures of saints on the wall, and a "Souvenir of Lourdes" on the center table, arranged in a triangle with two books of Meditations.

One heard the noise of London very faintly, for the window looked out upon a graveled, shut-in back garden, where trees were growing green within black walls, and sparrows chirped and flew. There was not a sound within the house itself, and nothing in the little room seemed ever to have been disturbed, or ever to need cleaning. . . . A peaceful, cloistral spot, wherein the only jarring note was — myself.

Yes, of that there could be no doubt. There was a tall glass-fronted bookcase in the corner, which re-

flected my figure almost like a mirror. I had dressed for the afternoon, since I was to go out with my aunt later on, and my dress of blue chiffon and white Spanish lace, daringly touched with rose, and topped by a toque of roses, looked the very uniform of the world, the flesh, and the devil. I must confess to loving my clothes — they were certainly more of a consolation to me during those nine years than any of the machine-made philanthropic schemes into which Aunt Florence dragged me, by way of distraction; and I am sure they gave quite as much pleasure to the world in general. But that afternoon, I felt I would rather have had a black veil on my head than any of Desirée's masterpieces, and the dainty pink petticoat that showed itself just above one Louis shoe, almost seemed — improper — when I thought of the nun in her simple woolen robe.

A bunch of frivolities — a bouquet of artificial flowers — an embittered woman, taking to dress as to drink, that she might still the aching of an empty heart — so I saw myself in the glass. And, as I had wondered about the lilac the day before, I wondered now — to how many exquisitely-clothed women in great, unhappy London, were their pretty things just — drink?

Sitting there in my Paris dress, beside the window looking out on the gray and green little English garden, I fell a-musing on the old Papuan days. . . . If it had never happened — if Hugh and I had had a little house in the forest, and lived there ever since, away from all this world of dressing and dancing and keep-

ing up with the fads of the hour — away where the seas are colored like the gems in the gates of the Heavenly City, and flowers never fade, and birds of Paradise fly like crimson comets through trees that are always bright and green — where life is long and simple, and the small things of the world take their proper place, and the great things — friendship, and courage, and love, and death — are the only ones that matter — if I had lived thus, should I have been the woman that I was?

So I mused. And the bitter, handsome face under the splendid hat looked back at me from the glass, and answered, "No!"

Oh, to leave it all! London and the life I had grown to hate — Papua and its memories that burned like fire — everything I had ever known and wearied of and suffered by — just to leave the world, and rest — in the cloister or the grave — but rest!

. . . "My dear child, I am afraid you are very unhappy."

He wore soft shoes, and I had not heard him enter, nor had I seen him, for I was leaning my face on my hand. I looked up. The priest — Father Ferrer, as I afterwards learned his name — was standing beside me — a small, plump, silver-haired figure, with eyes that were extraordinarily soft and shrewd, and a mouth that seemed to hold all the wisdom of all the world in its humorous corners.

"I am — most unhappy," I said.

He took a seat.

"Well — what can I do?" he asked, with a sort of

brisk kindliness. Somehow, he made me think of a doctor of souls with a large practice, examining a case.

"I am tired of the world," I said. "My mother was a Catholic. . . . I don't know that I have any objection to joining her church, if necessary. I want to become a nun; they are so peaceful and happy, and I have never been either."

The little priest felt in the pocket of his gown, and pulled out a snuff-box. Snuffing with relish, he remarked:

"My dear lady, a convent isn't a moral casualty ward. And a call to the religious life is not granted to everyone. Pardon me, but I don't think you show any special signs of such a grace — even if you were a Catholic — a detail, by the way, of some importance.

"Suppose we keep to the point that you are unhappy," he went on, "and that you want to tell someone all about it: well, I'm ready to listen and help if I can — very ready, my child."

His small round face creased into a kindly smile. I liked the smile, but I didn't like the assumption that I was a slack-lipped creature who could not keep her troubles to herself — I who had kept my own secrets for ten years, and asked help from none.

"My troubles are — my troubles," I said. "I have been, more or less, discontented and unhappy for ten years. I want to get away from it all — from everything. Will any convent take me?"

"Certainly not," said the little Father, still smiling. "If you wish to be instructed with a view to joining

the Church, you can receive instruction. If it should appear, eventually, that you have a vocation to any special order, you could become, first, a postulant, then a novice, and finally, if you persevered, a professed nun. That is all that anyone can say."

It was not quite what I had expected, and I scarcely knew what to answer. Instruction — vocation — these were new terms to me, and they left me cold. To plunge into the oblivion of the cloister as one might plunge into a river, and for the same reason — that was all I had thought of. It seemed that this was not to be done, and I began to lose interest.

The little father's manner changed. He put both hands on his plump knees, and leaned forward.

"My child, you need help," he said, looking at me with a keenness that took in every detail of my appearance. "You are not of my flock, and never may be, but a soul is a soul. Who is troubling you — you, a woman cursed with beauty, and alone?"

It did not seem strange to me that he should know what was in my heart better than I knew it myself — for in truth, not until that instant had I understood that the name of the greatest difficulty in my path was — Walter. He had the gift of inspiring confidence; I answered him as simply as if I had known him all my life.

"A man I cannot marry," I said. "I don't exactly — love — him; but I am very, very fond of him, and he is so good; you cannot think how good he is —"

The priest took snuff rather sharply, and ran an eye

over my face and figure. Then he snuffed again. It was almost as if he had spoken, and I answered him.

"He *is* good," I repeated —"only — I cannot tell you how it hurts me to see him unhappy — and I grow so tired —"

I do not know what can have come over me, for I am reserved and self-possessed as a rule, but I began to cry. . . . I felt frightened. It was as if someone, something, had flashed a light on my path, and shown me an unsuspected precipice, close to my feet. I did not believe it, I fought against the knowledge, but it forced itself home.

"I! I! Impossible! It could never have been!" I kept saying to myself, in a kind of cold horror.

I do not know whether I spoke aloud, but if I did, Father Ferrer made no sign. He waited till I was calm, and then said —

"This man you cannot marry, my child — he is already married?"

"No," I said faintly. Was my secret going to escape me after all?

"Then?" The Father's eyes dropped to my glove. It was thin and tight-fitting, and showed the outline of my hand.

I cannot tell what spirit it was that moved me, but I put my fingers inside the collar of my dress, and drew out the chain that held my wedding ring. I always wore it — why, it would be hard to say, except that I had a curious feeling of wickedness if I took it off. While that bright little circlet lay on my breast,

I felt that I was guarded. . . . Until to-day, I had never asked myself, from what?

The priest looked at the ring, hanging on the front of my dress.

"Is that so?" he said. "You are not a widow, my child?"

"No," I said. I got up and walked over to the window, struggling for calmness. I saw that my secret was all to be told at last, and it came hard.

I looked out of the window; there were a few crocuses outside, lingering here and there in the brown beds upon the tiny lawn. They shivered in the breeze of late afternoon. I saw them then without seeing; days after, I remembered them. But in the moment itself, a flood of old recollections swept over me — the wondrous sunsets of Port Moresby Bay, turning the west to a very Armageddon of flaming scarlet, as the swift tropic night came down — the scent of mint and sandalwood and frangipanni flowers — the silver glowing of the palms beneath the moon, on the slopes that led to Government House — the gleam of a man's white suit, that used to glide like a ghost among the eucalyptus and the lemons, when midnight lay upon the bay and town, and all the world was still. . . .

When I returned to my seat, I had put down my veil over my face, and if there were traces of tears on my cheeks, they were hidden.

Sheltered by the film of gauze, and keeping my eyes bent on the left hand that lay in my lap beside its fellow — the hand all empty of the golden talisman it

should have worn these many years — I spoke at last, and told the Father all there was to tell.

It took a long time in the telling. The sun slipped low down the smoky garden wall while I spoke; the grimy sparrows gathered in the trees, chirping as they chirp when day is on the wane. Sitting in the polished, unlived-in little room, I felt the afternoon grow chill, and saw the young leaves begin to tremble, and the thin grass shiver, and the crocuses shake in their sunless beds, beneath the bitter wind of evening, before I had made an end.

Father Ferrer sat silent in his chair all the while, his keen blue eyes glancing now and then at my face. When I had ended, he leant forward, and took my hand in his.

"My dear child!" he said, very kindly. "My dear child!"

I was not crying now; I had shed all my tears — but I was trembling, and very cold.

Father Ferrer rose to his feet, and rang a bell. Someone came to the door, and returned almost immediately, carrying a glass of wine on a tray.

"Drink that, and then we'll talk," said the priest.

It seemed to put new life into my shaken nerves, and I was quite myself before long.

"And now, my child," said the good old man, gravely but kindly, "I must ask you if you realize — though I fear you do not — the great sin of which you have been guilty."

"Sin!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sin," said the priest. "You are not of our

church, and in consequence, you have not had the help furnished by the true sacramental grace of marriage. But marriage, in any church, is a holy and a binding thing. You took most solemn vows, only to break them — you wished to take vows of another kind, quite as grave, which would have been, in your case, a mere mockery. . . . Child, child, how did you hope for happiness or rest, in a life that had gone so far wrong?"

I scarcely knew how to answer; I felt half stunned. Everyone had always pitied me — tried to compensate me — it was always Hugh who was to blame. I in fault — I!

"You think I should have waited — stayed,—" I faltered.

"I do. My dear child, you have told me a great deal about your ruined life. What about the life you have ruined?"

"But — he had killed someone — and — he had been married to that native woman — and never told me —"

"Granted. From what you say, he had terrible provocation for the crime, and he had been fully punished for it. As to the native wife — well, my child, it seems you knew very well you were marrying a man of violent temper and unknown history; your people objected to the match, and you defied them, and insisted on having your own way. When the drawbacks that you had always known were practically brought home to you, you deserted the man who loved you. Heartlessly — wickedly, my child."

I felt as if stones were being rained about my head. I wicked! I, who had been the darling and plaything of everyone all my life — Father, Walter, Aunt Florence, Hugh himself — who had never been blamed for anything — who had always found the looks and the charm that Providence had been pleased to give me a magic shield against hard words or harsh judgments. . . . But to this wise old man with the calm unworldly face, I, Stephanie Hammond, loved, popular, and pretty, was just a soul — a sinful soul and nothing more.

Heartless! Wicked! Had I then been blind, all these years?

But he was going on.

"I think, my child, it was not so much his crime of shedding blood, as his foolish, but not sinful action in having formerly married a native girl, that was the chief cause of your desertion. Was it not?"

"I think — it had something to do with it," I answered, very low. Indeed, it had gone hard with me to think of that black wife, dead though she was. It had hurt my pride, and my pride was always the strongest part of my character.

"As to his message, I take that to have been the bitter cry of a wounded man — no more," said the Father. "But even if that rash vow had been deliberately meant, and intended to be kept, it was nevertheless your duty to have offered to return. Had he refused, you would then have enjoyed the peace of a conscience satisfied — which peace, my child, you never have had."

"Never," I said. The sun had faded altogether from the garden; clouds were darkening the pale spring sky. I looked beyond the blackened walls, and saw the gold New Guinea sun, and the palms, and the sapphire seas — so far, so very far away,— far as my youth, my love. . . . What remained to me of life? How could I unwind this tangle that held in a hopeless coil the lives of all who were dear to me?

Father Ferrer went on, after a short pause.

"Do you know whether your husband is still living?"

"I — I think so," I said. "My friend would have asked me to marry him — any time — if news had come that I was free. He has never told me anything — but I am sure he would take pains to find that out."

"Will it cost you much to part with your friend?"

"To part with him . . . !" I cried, throwing up my veil, and looking at the priest with dismayed eyes.

"I see," said Father Ferrer, "then, there is all the more reason that you should."

"And never see him again!" I said. "But — I have no fear — I am not bad, Father, and neither is he."

"Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall," said the priest. "Look into your own heart, my child."

There was quite a long silence in the room. I do not think I should ever wish to write down all that passed through my mind.

After a while, I turned to the priest, and said dully —

"What should I do?"

"You have asked for my advice," he answered. "I give it to you. Leave your friend. Communicate with your husband, and ask him whether he is willing to forget the past — as you are. You have both something to forgive, but believe me — believe an old man very near the grave — he has the most. . . . My child, we are both tired now. I hope to see you again soon. Pray for yourself. Pray for me."

The sunset had broken through the clouds at last. Its golden light fell through the wide uncurtained window, full upon his face, and I saw him as in a glory from heaven, while I said good-by.

. . . Friend of one day, I shall see you again — in heaven!

Father Ferrer died that night.

He had long been ill of heart disease, but no one had thought the end to be so near. His last act on earth was that deed of kindness done to me.

I heard of his death when I called again, a day or two later. Of the shock it gave me, I need not speak. But it set the seal on my already half-made resolution. One who was an angel in heaven had counseled me — I would abide by his counsel.

CHAPTER XIII

FOR days and days we had been creeping up the endless Queensland coast in the great Australian liner, leaving parallel after parallel of latitude behind us, and drawing nearer, with every revolution of the screw, to the burning equatorial lands. Every morning the winds that blew through the open ports were warmer, the sparkle of the sea more brilliantly jeweled; every night the stars were larger and softer. Venus, rising from the sea at sunset, had grown so bright that she flung a thread of silver across the calm waters of the Barrier Reef. As yet, she cast no shadow, but I knew well that when the New Guinea boat dropped anchor under Paga Hill, I should see — as long ago — my silhouette in gray, drawn out upon the ivory deck by the queen star of the tropic world.

We had left off our furs at Brisbane — it was June, mid-winter in the South; but north of the jacaranda tree Australia knows no cold. Townsville, Bowen, Mackay were passed, strange sultry little towns dozing in the dust under turquoise skies; the coral islands of the Great Barrier Reef were showing right and left of us in the shallow, milky-green seas — bright bouquets of foliage set on tablets of sand like snow. Muslins were in wear now, and white suits; and the punkah swung above iced fruits and dishes at table;

and the many New Guinea passengers, at last, began to wake up from their shivering hibernation in sheltered corners, and talk Papuan talk. . . .

How well I knew it all! What an overpowering perfume of past days it held for me! The doings of the mysterious Kukukuku — that tribe of ghostly marauders, whom no white man had seen in my day, and who were still, after ten years (it seemed) no less a mystery than of old — the talk of gold and gold-mining — three ounces to the day on the Yodda, limitless hopes of the Waria; rumors of El Dorado in the islands — gossip, one might almost say scandal, about the untraveled west and center — who had found and traced out what; whose name was unjustly attached to the peaks of which semi-explored great range — pearl-shelling in the East; turtle-shelling about the Gulf; what toll the alligators had lately taken in the way of stock or native boys — who was to be R. M. of where; why someone had been recalled, or sent out, or reprimanded — all the old chatter of the old days. . . . Was I indeed in the twentieth century?

But with it all, there was much that was strange to me. They spoke of white women and children living in the country; of churches, hospitals and stores; of three-weekly steamers; of dances and picnics now and then; of many Government officials under the new Australian régime — and they spoke not at all of head-hunting raids, of schooners seized and white crews massacred; of cannibal feasts held defiantly on the very shores — all of which had been

matter for almost every report that reached my father, years ago.

There was much plantation talk, too, and this was so new to me that I joined the most talkative group, late one evening when the moon was up on deck, and listened quietly to what they said. I had entered myself in the passenger list as Miss Stephens, for reasons of my own, and no one knew that I had ever been to Papua.

Great tracts of country, it seemed, were now laid in rubber and coffee and hemp. Fine plantation houses, served by troops of woolly-headed "boys" had sprung up everywhere. Tourists — tourists in New Guinea! — came up by every steamer to see the plantation country, and visit the mines, and study the absorbingly interesting life of the native villages.

. . .

. . . Well, in my day, the villages would have absorbed them — with the aid of a cooking pot — and that would have been the end of the tour. Truly, Papua was changed!

I should not find what I had left — that seemed clear. Shouldn't I after all, find what I had come to seek?

Walter Carolan, on the day when I broke the news to him and to Aunt Lillaby — oh, that wretched day! Shall I ever forget the anger of consternation of my aunt, the white dismay of my dearest friend! — Walter had told me that, so far as he knew, Hugh was living, and in New Guinea still — whether British, Dutch or German New Guinea he could not say. He

had long ago arranged with an old friend in one of the missions to send him intelligence of Hugh's death or disappearance, should either occur. From time to time, at long intervals, a postcard had come, with the words "no news!" The last postcard had been sent more than a year ago; since then, the missionary was dead.

That was all he had to say. What it cost him to tell me even so much, I could guess only too well.

Aunt Florence tried hard to prevent my going, when I announced my intention of returning to New Guinea to find out what had become of Hugh — not necessarily, of course, to join him. Poor aunt! she had been very good to me all those years,— my own tiny income I had never needed to touch, and she had openly expressed her intention of making me her heiress eventually, since she was a childless widow, with few relations. Walter Carolan was a connection of hers, and had certainly some claim on her; but I think she hoped — poor aunt — that both claims might be united. She loved him dearly, and counted him almost as a son.

I think she was really more grieved for him than for herself, when I plucked up my courage, after many weeks of secret thought, to tell her of my resolve. She had quite made up her mind that fevers, or natives, or alligators, would set me free some day or other, and bring about the fulfillment of her wishes. Aunt Florence, dear woman, was one of the old-fashioned kind who tenaciously believe through all dis-

couragement, that "two and two will always make four, if only one cries enough about it."

Walter himself took the news so badly, at first, that I was frightened. I almost feared he would do something desperate; I had never suspected him of such strength of feeling. But it helped me to see the real necessity of what I was doing, and to crush down the dangerous compassion for him, of which I could not but feel conscious, in those days of disturbance and emotion. I still loved the memory of Hugh, but —

How shall I put it? A woman is — a woman; her heart, sometimes, will turn to what is nearest, while her soul, the best and truest part of her, still points like the magnetic needle steadily to its own pole. But life is lived more by heart than by soul — more in little things than great.

In fine I felt it was best for me to go, and Walter, though perhaps he could not feel it, knew it, and acted accordingly.

It was he, in the end, who helped me out. It was he who prevented my aunt from calling in a Harley Street specialist to examine into my state of mind — as she intended — who stopped her, afterwards, in full career for the office of a Continental railway, to buy Riviera tickets, and carry me away willy-nilly. He could not prevent her sending for her solicitor, and altering her will; but that I did not care about. I had enough money of my own to carry out my intentions, by dint of selling out a little capital, and I

did not fear the future. To *live* in any way — even to suffer in poverty — seemed better than the dead stagnation of those long, long years, stifled in luxury and ease, yet starved of growth, of usefulness, of meaning.

At the last, when my outfit was bought, and my trunks ready, and the P. & O. liner that was to take me to Sydney, was due to sail next day, Walter called to see me alone. I had scarce had time to speak to him during those last few days, but he seemed to be taking my departure better than I could have hoped.

That day, however, I knew the truth. He looked like death when he came in. He sat slowly down in his chair, as if he were tired or old — Walter, who was far under forty yet — and looked at me with eyes that seemed almost too wearied to be sad.

"Stephanie," he said, "I've come to say good-by."

I could not answer him.

"I think I'd better not see you off to-morrow," he went on. "I don't think I could quite stand that, though I could stand — parting — since it has to be. It isn't any fault of yours, my dear, but you are rather cruel to men."

"'. . . Is it good-by? I could stand that, I guess, but I can't stand what you're giving me. . . . It's the cruelty that's in you — in women. . . .'"

Across the years that other voice came back to me, speaking in almost the same words. . . .

"Oh, Walter, indeed I couldn't help it — I never could!" I cried.

"No, my dear," he said, with those kind eyes of his shining as they had always shone on me — as they would never shine again, in all the coming years — "After all, you know —

> "'Why should a heart have been there,
> In the way of a fair woman's foot?'"

He got up, and began to walk restlessly about the room.

"See here, Stephanie," he said. "I wanted to tell you that, strange though it may seem, I'm — almost — glad this has happened. I don't think Lynch deserves a reconciliation, I don't believe he'd ever make you happy. But you will feel differently when you have done what you could — and after all, something had to happen sometime. And I know this life is nearly killing you. Aunt Florence is a pretty wearing sort of person, though you never would allow it, and as for me, well, the better friend I am to you, perhaps —"

He stopped, and began fingering the geraniums in the window stand.

"Perhaps," he went on, looking away from me, "the worse I've got to learn to live my life without you — that's all."

It seemed much, to judge by his voice; his face I could not see, for he was still plucking cruelly at the geranium buds and leaves, and casting them on the floor.

"And you've got to learn to do without my friendship. Well, that won't cost you very much, I dare say."

More than you thought, my friend, my friend! I was made so that I could give love to very few — but what I gave to you was almost the twin flower to the flower of love itself.

"In short," he went on, "it's best to break — anyhow — but break. I've helped you out, because I thought so. Not because I didn't care, Stephanie."

He turned round now, and faced me as I sat in my chair. It was a warm day; the window was open, and mignonette, wet with a recent shower, smelled sweetly from the balcony outside. I heard the humming of motor-cars, and the short clip-clip of hoofs on the wood pavement below.

"I have done all I could," he said. "I still think it a wild-goose chase, but I know of old what it is to cross you when your mind is set on anything. You wouldn't have me write letters to the Government lot — well, I have got some for you to present, if you change your mind. New Guinea is not what it was; you will be perfectly safe in the towns, and of course, there will be no need for you to go beyond them. If things turn out badly, your aunt will be only too glad to have you back. As for me — in that case, I think — it would still be good-by, Stephanie. I've done all I can. All I can — now and forever." He took my hands in his. The light fell clear on his dear brown eyes, and his straight, strong, handsome features. . . . Oh, if one could but love best the best man one has ever met!

"You'll marry — won't you, Walter?" was all I

could say. I wonder was it very little-minded of me to feel pain — as I did — at his reply?

"Yes, I hope I shall, some day. I shan't love her very much, whoever she may be; but I'll treat her decently, please God. It's better I should marry — when I can — but that won't be just yet. And now — Stephanie, my darling —"

There was no need of more words. I am not ashamed to say that I put my arms round his neck, and clung to him, crying bitterly. He did not kiss me — he never had kissed me. He held me very tight for a moment, and then let me go.

"God bless you — God bless you," I heard him say; and then the door shut, and I dropped back into my chair, blind with crying.

Next day the *Macedonia* sailed from Tilbury. No one saw me off but Aunt Florence's maid. Aunt Florence herself had a headache, she said. I think, poor dear, the truth was that she had cried herself nearly as sick as I had. We parted at the house, knowing well what neither of us cared to say — that come what might, I never should return.

I had my plans clear in my head. I meant to stay in Port Moresby for a while, under my assumed name of Stephens — simply as a lady traveling for pleasure. There are many things a woman of thirty can do without remark, that would be impossible to a young girl. While there, I would try to find out, secretly, whether Hugh was living, and where he was. I feared the thought of this somewhat; there was no

knowing what he might not have sunk to, in those lonely, desperate years.

Yes — I knew what Father Ferrer would have said, as well as if I had heard him say it,—

"Whatever he is, is your fault — yours, who left him in his need."

As to what was to happen after, I made no plans, knowing that circumstances must guide me. One thing only was clear — I must find him.

I had no wish to be recognized by any stray acquaintances who might be remaining in the country, but there was little chance of that. Ten years had changed me a good deal, and I trusted much to the effect of altered fashions. The young girl of one-and-twenty, dressed always in flowing muslins, with close plaited hair, was not in any case very like the society woman of one-and-thirty, who wore fashionably scanty tailor-mades of linen and silk and holland, and filled up the brim of her big picture hats with a "halo" coiffure as big as a melon. . . . No, on the whole, I did not fear recognition, especially as there was scarce one of my former acquaintances left in New Guinea.

That night on the Queensland coast, as we thrashed through the warm black water, drawing nearer and nearer to the wild uncivilized lands that are so mysterious and so cruel, yet so compelling in their summons to all who have ever known them, a feeling of rest and freedom began to take possession of me. The P. & O. voyage, with its dressing and dancing and bridge playing, and its society sets and rivalries,

for all the world like that weary London I had left behind, was over. I could forget that I was one of "the best people." I was going where "the best is like the worst"— where life is real, naked even, and the elemental powers of nature press close round the little strongholds of civilization. . . . I was afraid of it, but I loved it, just as in the days gone by I had both feared and loved the man who was so completely one with the wild places of the earth. After all those years, I felt that I was going home.

The Red Gods' call! It was what Hugh had spoken of that night among the lemon trees; I had not understood him then, but I knew it now — as thousands of others, men and women, must know it all the world over. We women, I think, hear it for the most part through the voice of the man we love — but we hear it. Else, how would England's Empire ever have been made?

Next day we reached Cooktown, the last Australian port, and took ship on the Port Moresby boat, a smaller vessel than the Australian coastal liner, but nevertheless a marvelous improvement on the wandering schooners and stray cargo steamers of my day. Two evenings later, near to sunset, the immense blue coasts of Papua rose out of the sea, and all night long, in the silence and the dark, we ran past the sleeping shores of the Great Unknown Land.

I was the very first on deck next morning. The washing-down was just over, and not a passenger was to be seen, as I came out of my deck-cabin on the starboard side, and hurried round to port. . . .

Yes, there they were, the magnificent domes and ramparts of the Owen Stanley Range — the splendid spire of Mount Yule — Mount Victoria, far inland, rising, wave after wave, thirteen thousand feet into the ice-blue sky — the huge humps and saddlebacks of the inner ranges, peaks without a name, where no man yet had trod. . . .

From all I heard on board, it seemed, that despite the amazing development of the Central and Eastern provinces, the outer divisions of Papua remained much as they had been ten years ago. Much of the country was known only in part; great tracts remained quite unexplored. . . .

I was glad to hear this; it made me much more certain of finding what I had come to seek. A Ceylon of the Pacific (which I had almost feared to find in Papua, after all the plantation talks on the liner) would never have kept my lover.

In the early afternoon, we cast anchor under the shadow of Paga Hill.

Save for the increased number of houses in the township, there was little change. The peaky goblin hills, like the background of some mediæval tapestry — the dark-leaved mangroves running far out into the water — the palm-trees circling about the curve of the wide blue bay — the stilt-legged native village, built out over the flaming shallows; all were the same. I only was changed. . . . For the first time, I felt the cruel wrench that one suffers, looking on the senseless stones and paths and trees that saw one young, but yesterday, and that see one growing old,

while not a crack in the stones, not a shade of green in the hills is altered. . . . O changeless Nature, how cruelly you laugh at our fleeting lives of dust and shadow!

Tears filled my eyes as Government House came into view — the long, white house above the coco-palms, where the little-girl Stephanie, who was dead so long ago, used to come down the hill in her French shoes and frivolous muslins, to meet her lover under the rubber-tree. . . . Unchanged, that forest-like mass spread out in the little valley; ten years are as a day in the life of those giant trees. . . . But little-girl Stephanie, who had known and suffered nothing, what had you in common with the tired, lonely woman who watched your ghost that day?

Ghosts! the whole place was full of them. When I landed from the steamer's boat, and passed along the jetty, I scarcely knew whether I was living in the present or the past. True, Port Moresby was changed; it was now quite a fair-sized little town, with several big Government offices, and quite a number of white-washed iron bungalows standing on tall black piles, instead of the mere handful of huts I remembered. But the grassy streets, the green overhanging hills, dotted with shrub-like eucalyptus trees that never seemed to grow a day older (I used to say they were like the French knots in a piece of embroidery), the piecrust-colored rocks with their carnelian veinings, the dusty red pathways, the giant-headed natives in beads and calicoes, chewing betel nut in the shade of the frangipannis, the hot glare

of sea and sky and sun-beaten earth — how unchanged it all was!

Every bit of waste ground about Port Moresby is covered with wild mint; the air is always full of the warm aromatic scent. I do not know that I had ever taken special notice of it in the old days, but now, each breath I drew was full of memories, wakened by the odor of the fresh green leaves. . . . Surely, by and by, if I stood upon the slope and watched, a white-sailed cutter would come sweeping into the bay, with a sailorly figure at the tiller — the open door of the little tin house on the beach would whiten with an emerging figure in spotless drill, and Somebody with an auburn head and broad shoulders would appear on the shore, and begin to walk, far faster than anyone should walk in Port Moresby under the full afternoon sun, towards a corner in the track that would intercept me on my way home. . . .

Home! how foolish! that white bungalow across the bay was not my home now. It was the home of the new Australian Lieutenant Governor to whom my letters of introduction were addressed — those letters that I had torn up and cast through the port-hole of my cabin, the night after we left Tilbury. I might have saved myself the trouble; His Excellency was holidaying in Queensland.

I was glad that he was away. It was hard enough to know that the dear old place was in other hands; to have seen it occupied by strangers would have been harder still.

I had engaged a room at the hotel — but I was in

no hurry to occupy it, not much liking the look of the place. The day was still young; I put up my sun umbrella, and started for a stroll along the beach behind the town, towards the little iron hut that had once been more interesting and attractive than any place, to me. Who lived in it now, I wondered? and did he, or she, or they, remember the former occupant? Probably not. From all I had heard on the ship, there was not a single one of my former acquaintances remaining in Port Moresby.

I had an odd sense of freedom in roaming about like this, due, I suppose, to the re-awaking of the old New Guinea feeling that "nobody cared." I suppose there never was a country in the world where everyone was, and is, so completely free to do what seems good in his or her own eyes, without remark.

Papua seems to attract strange and eccentric characters as honey attracts flies; independence of thought and action is the very air of the place. In any other small, out-of-the-way community, a woman, still young and not unattractive, well-dressed, with the manners of society, traveling unaccompanied and apparently without object, might have excited a good deal of comment. I knew my Papua, and knew that I should not.

The little cottage stood dozing in the sun, the big palm-trees above making penciled shadows on its roof. The door was open, the place apparently empty. . . . Should I venture?

My heels made a clapping noise on the veranda as I approached the door. Somebody stirred inside. I

hastily prepared a sentence asking for a direction to the native village, and waited. The door filled up with a massive form in a suit of pink pyjamas, and a pair of white sand-shoes, and an elderly man, tall, stout, white-haired, and amiable of countenance, advanced.

I knew him at once; my heart gave a jump that almost turned me faint. It was Mr. Worboise.

Was he alone? And if he were not? . . .

I glanced wildly at the grove of palm-trees, with some mad thought of running away and hiding myself, but it was too late to think of that. He had seen me, and — he knew me.

"It's Mrs. Hugh," he said quite calmly, as if I had gone away about a week before, and just returned. Once more, I realized that I was in the country where no one ever is surprised.

"Yes, Mr. Worboise," I answered, feeling all on a sudden one enormous blush. . . . It seemed as if it were written in letters of fire on my forehead that I had come to find my husband — my husband, who perhaps did not even want me. . . .

"Come in, come in," he said. "I'm livin' all alone here ('Thank heaven!' I whispered to myself), and the place ain't what you'd call tidy, but you'll excuse it. Come in, come in — I'm very glad to see you."

He still spoke exactly as he might have done ten years ago, and was really so very little changed, that I felt my head swimming with confusion, as I followed him into the house, which I had once or twice visited with Hugh. If anyone had told me then that I had

just waked up from a long dream, and that it was nearly time for me to hurry back to Government House for tea, lest Papa should suspect that I had been out by myself, down to the beach to meet Hugh — I think I should have believed it.

We went into the little front room, and Mr. Worboise gave me a chair, and set about boiling water over the very old Primus lamp with the broken leg that I knew he had had ten years ago. I don't know if the purple trade pocket-handkerchief hanging out of his pocket was the same, but I really think it was. The sound of the sea-waves creaming on the beach below, and the soft singing of the reef far away, almost made me cry. . . . It was all so like old days, and yet . . . !

"Well, Mrs. Hugh," said Mr. Worboise, busying himself with tea-pot and pannikins —" and 'ow's yourself?"

His accent was quite as terrible as I had remembered it, but it did not annoy me. . . . I have known people who would have shrunk from a murdered "h" as from a murdered body, yet from whom I should never have expected one-half the delicate consideration and reticence that I knew might be looked for from Mr. Worboise. If I stayed in Port Moresby a year, I knew I should never be troubled with questions from him.

"I am very well," I answered. "I have come to revisit New Guinea, Mr. Worboise; I had a fancy to see the old places again."

"Aye, aye," he replied rather wheezily, pouring the

water into the tea-pot. "You'll find changes, Mrs. Hugh — changes."

I was so terribly afraid that he would begin to speak of the one subject that really interested me, that I hurriedly commenced talking of the political changes that had occurred during the last few years — the taking over of the colony by Australia — the new land laws that had thrown open the country for settlement — the number of planters now in Papua — the rubber-boom that seemed to be on its way.

Mr. Worboise listened to me patiently, pouring out the tea, but made no remark.

"'Is Excellency's away," was all he said, when I had done. "I'm afraid there's no place in Port where you'll be comfortable like. The drinkin' that goes on at the hotel, when the schooner fellers come in to 'ave a good time, makes it not what you would say a very heligible place to stop."

"I thought so," I answered, "but I really didn't see . . ."

"Why not come 'ere, if you can put up with the likes of it, and me?" asked Mr. Worboise. "It ain't much of a place but there, Papua's Papua yet, in spite of the la-di-da plantation crowd, and all the roughing it ain't over. You'd be a deal quieter 'ere, Mrs. Hugh, and that little room at the back ain't too bad — it used to be —"

"What a lovely view there is from the door!" I interrupted, getting up hurriedly to look at it. I cannot say I saw very much of the view.

"That tea's too 'ot for you, let me put some more

Hideal into it," observed my old friend calmly. "Well, to go back to what I was sayin', what do you think of comin' 'ere?"

There is no Mrs. Grundy in Papua; both of us knew that I could stay alone with Mr. Worboise as long as I liked, without making anyone talk. His age and character were sufficient protection, in a country where the absence of the stone-walled English privacies insures that everyone shall be known for exactly what he is. I have often thought — though it is one of the things one would not care to say to the first comer — that "virtue" is necessarily its own reward in civilized countries, but something much more, in the unbroken lands. There, it is a sort of check-book which allows you to draw on public countenance and good will, without question, while the "fast" or dishonest person who would easily pass muster at home, finds his or her checks dishonored. Both then and later, I did many things in Papua that would have set every scion of the Grundy family shrieking, in another country — and passed, I know, without a word of criticism. If Papua, as Hugh used to say, is the country of the Infinitely Impossible, it is also the country of the Finitely Possible; and therein, I think, lies much of its charm.

Not to make a long story of a short one, I may say that I agreed to Mr. Worboise's proposal, sent for my things, and took up my quarters in the quiet back room that had once been Hugh's. There was no sitting-room, but as all Port Moresby lives on verandas, that made no difference.

I arranged to pay my share of the housekeeping, rather against the will of my kind host; but, with his usual good-feeling, he gave in when he saw I was bent on it; I knew that the little annuity on which he lived (the product of some years' successful pearling, and an amazing fit of prudence) was not enough for the support of two, and I feared nothing so much as to become a burden on anyone — I, who after so many years of sheltered dependence, was learning at last, slowly and painfully, to stand alone. . . .

. . . . . .

The steamer was gone, leaving behind her the "calm after storm" that follows the call of a ship, in the far-away countries. I had spent a day in the little beach-cottage; it was sunset now, and the native boys were making a clinking noise with the tea-things in the cook-house outside. Above the roof three leather-necks mocked and clattered in the palm-tops —"Ki-ou! Wee-ka! Wakatipu!" just as they used to do in the evenings long ago, and the sea was turning from opal-blue to ink-blue, over Basilisk Reef.

Mr. Worboise and I were sitting in canvas-chairs on the veranda, enjoying the freshness of sundown. Neither of us had spoken for some minutes; our conversation had ranged over a few small items of local gossip, and then dropped exhausted. I think we each knew that a different subject was in the other's mind, unspoken.

There was not much light from the sky, but the hurricane lamp on the table indoors shone out across

the veranda, and by its rays I could see Mr. Worboise scanning my face so earnestly that I felt quite embarrassed.

"Am I much changed?" I asked.

"Mrs. Hugh," he answered earnestly, "I'd not be tellin' the 'ole truth and nothin' but the truth, so 'elp me God, if I said you wasn't. When you was here first, you was a young lady like a w'ite rosebud. You're a lady like a w'ite rose that's open-blowed, now. One ain't the other, but one's as good as the other — and maybe better."

I said nothing.

"And maybe better," he repeated, significantly. "There's things people comes to think differently about when they've 'ad — but law, don't you mind my gab, Mrs. Hugh, I ain't askin' questions," he broke off. "Come in and 'ave your tea; I've a reel nice bit of wallaby 'ind-quarter for you."

And during the whole meal he avoided, with the most scrupulous care, any approach to a comment on myself or my doings. If I remember rightly, he told me a good deal about a cannibal tribe of the far North, that had lately appealed to the Government for protection from its neighbors, on the grounds that the latter committed (I think) something like a breach of etiquette, in devouring the complainant's relatives alive.

"'Dyin' was only what a man had to do, some time or hother'— that's what they said," Mr. Worboise explained. "Bein' eat was a thing that might 'appen to anyone; they didn't complain of that neither.

But the Orokiva, they said, was eatin' them alive, cuttin' them —"

"Mr. Worboise — please!" I entreated.

"Don't you like to 'ear it? I'm sorry, Mrs. Hugh; I didn't think you was sensitive about them things, knowing the country and all."

He fell silent, and the meal was finished without a word. Out on the veranda afterwards, in the starlight, the silence still continued. There we sat, we two, who had loved Hugh better than anyone else in the world, one longing to speak, the other to hear, and yet both dumb. The mopokes moaned in the little strip of bush behind the sand; the black wings of the flying-foxes beat now and then like sails of aërial canoes across the silver face of the rising moon. The winking lights of the fishing boats out on the reef died one by one, as the brown folk of Hanuabada and Elivara ended their evening's sport, and went home. And still we were silent, as if some unholy spell had been laid on both.

Mr. Worboise got up at last, with a heavy sigh, and I rose with him. It was bedtime. We turned to go into the house. The light of the lamp on the table inside fell on both our faces, and we saw each other clearly.

I don't know what he read in mine, but what I saw in his broke the spell at last. I could not bear that look of bitter disappointment. It seemed to me that I had caused enough disappointment to all who cared for me, without laying that burden also on those who cared for Hugh.

"Mr. Worboise," I said, summoning all my courage and forcing the words out—"where is he?"

. . . . . .

We talked till long after midnight; both had much to say. The whole story of Sanderson and his fate—the tale of the terrible four years' imprisonment—Worboise's vain attempts to gain any news of me—his conviction that Hugh had had news all the time, but would not tell it, and that, whatever it was, it fanned his anger against me to a hotter flame—this, and much more (a great deal more, for my good old friend was not one who could keep to the point) Mr. Worboise told me, out in the dusk of the starlight, with the night-wind blowing down from the far-away unknown ranges, and the mopokes crying and calling over Paga Hill. He told it to me as to one who had a right to know all, and I listened without comment for the most part. I had given up pretending to myself or to anyone else, now, that I had come to New Guinea with any other purpose than that of being reconciled to Hugh. I had been ashamed before—why ashamed, I could hardly have told; but it certainly was the case. Now, listening to the tale of Hugh's truest friend, I knew that my husband needed me, with a greater need than he himself could understand, and all thought of injured pride died down. Mr. Worboise told me of bitter words that Hugh had spoken against me, in his long imprisonment; of a nature that seemed warped and soured, after he was free again; of the hatred that he showed to all women, more especially the white wives and sis-

ters and daughters who had by this time begun to take up their residence in the country; of his life in the mountains and the unexplored interior, growing year by year more lonely and self-dependent; of the messages received by Mr. Worboise at long intervals, asking for clothes or cartridges, or tinned goods to be sent to some half-way spot where his boys could come down and take them; of the wandering livelihood he picked up, gold-digging, sago-getting, bird-shooting — this, and much more he told me. He had not seen Hugh for two years; it was as long as that since he had come down within the limits of the known and civilized country — and in the interval there had been no news. The truth was, that no one knew where he was.

"But don't you be took down at that, Mrs. Hugh," added Mr. Worboise earnestly, "for there's a way of findin' out, I think, and I'll do everythin' I can to get at it."

Of myself, extraordinarily little was said. Mr. Worboise did not seem to want to know how those ten years had passed with me; it was evidently a matter of secondary importance, to him. . . . Once more I was made to realize — and indeed, I think it may have been good for me to realize — that I was not any longer the center of the universe. The tables were turned, most truly. If Aunt Florence and Walter and Papa had taken my view too exclusively, certainly Hugh's friend held his. I was simply Hugh Lynch's wife, to him — something of which his friend had been deprived, but which it might be possible to

give back to him — and should be possible, if any exertions of Mr. Worboise's could bring it about. I really believe, if he had thought that Hugh would tie me up in a cellar and feed me on bread and water, or serve me up with sago-sticks and pick my bones, cannibal-fashion, he would none the less have tried to contrive the restoration of his friend's legal property to his friend, provided that he was sure it was for the good of Hugh.

Somehow or other, all the limelight died out of the affair after that evening. There had been a good deal before; I had felt my position to be rather that of the goddess stooping from the car — the martyr to duty nobly carrying out a sacrifice — the heroine of a tragedy coming forward to the footlights, with the orchestra playing, and the audience applauding. . . . After . . . well, I had not thought very much about that. Whatever happened, I should have done my duty. If Hugh refused to have anything to do with me, I should go away somewhere and devote my life to good works, in a Sister of Mercy sort of dress, or perhaps become a hospital nurse. If he wanted me to share his miserable cottage, wherever it was, and reform him from the very bad ways into which he might have fallen, I should certainly do it. In either case, I and my duty were secure. . . .

But Mr. Worboise didn't seem to think my duty and my sacrifice mattered the worth of a pin's head. The limelight and the orchestra were all for Hugh, so far as he was concerned.

Well — I swallowed that, as I had swallowed a

good deal more, and went to bed, to sleep a little, and think a great deal. Mr. Worboise kept no vigil, at all events; every corner of the resounding, little iron house had ample evidence of that.

The next few days were very quiet. I had developed a morbid dread of being recognized by some stray acquaintance of old times, and scarcely left the house, except at dusk. Mr. Worboise was away a great deal, asking questions here, there and everywhere; going down the coast in a cutter to various plantations where they obtained labor from the far inland districts, and could therefore give news of the interior; intercepting trading schooners; interviewing Government officials. At first there seemed to be little result. The whole country was mad on rubber, and no one seemed to have a thought to spare beyond the coastal and nearer inland districts where the money-bearing trees could be planted; the unknown interior was less thought of and spoken of than during any part of the past ten years.

But at last a clue was obtained, and Mr. Worboise brought it to me beaming with delight.

"A gold sovereign to a red 'errin' e's in the Gulf country, Mrs. Hugh," he declared. "We'll find 'im soon now, you may be sure. Barnes Peters, the tradin' firm, they says they've been sellin' stores to a Kiwai what come up from the West in a white man's cutter; the stores was white man's stores, and Barnes Peters' manager, 'e says the boy lied proper when 'e said that the stuff was for a Malay tradin' down Orokolo way; there ain't no such feller there."

"Where do you think he is?" I asked.

"I'd put my finger on the Purari Delta, if you ast me," answered Mr. Worboise.

"Can I get a letter there?"

"A letter?" repeated Mr. Worboise blankly. "A letter? Was you thinkin' of writin' a letter, Mrs. Hugh?"

"Why not?" I asked nervously.

"Mrs. Hugh," he answered, breathing heavily, and fixing his round eyes on me, "don't you trust to no letters. You know 'im, and I know 'im, and we both know 'e ain't all milk and water. 'E's been nursin' anger again you all these years, and if you write, supposin' 'e gets the letter, which ain't certain, more like 'e'll tear it up, and stamp on the bits of it, rather nor answer it. But if you goes to him personal, 'e won't tear you up. . . . Not likely," said the old man, taking a long look at me.

"How can I?" I said, trembling. "I always was afraid of Hugh, and I'm far more so now — and if he's angry with me, how could I ever dare face him? Oh, I'd rather go home again — and yet I can't go home — I wish I could just die and have done with it all!"

"Now look-a-here, Mrs. Hugh, don't you talk none of dyin'," said Mr. Worboise, earnestly. "It'll be all right, you take my word for it. But if you 'aven't the 'eart to face goin' to a place like the Delta — which is a bad place, I don't deny it — and if you're too afraid to face 'im neither, why then," he said slowly, "I'll do what I can to find him and bring him back myself.

But don't you count on it. Seein's one thing, readin' and hearin's another."

There was a pause. . . . I wonder, does God allow his angels to show one visions sometimes for our guidance? Waking visions, as well as sleeping? I think he does; I think I had one then.

I saw a man, no longer young — bitter, hard, and lonely, half-savage, living in a lonely palm-hut among fierce cannibal-natives, without friends, without help or hope. . . . I saw myself, who had linked my lot with his, living a life of sheltered luxury, far from him and his troubles — hearing him constantly blamed, and defending him only in the secret tribunal of my own mind — leaning on another man for help and comfort, living my narrow, little, self-satisfied life of luxury and flattery until, pitying the friend who had so much of life's best things, and pitying scarce at all the man who was eating his heart out with bitterness and loneliness in the New Guinea bush, uncared for and unhelped, he,

"Not Lancelot, nor another,"

whom I had loved and married — whom God had given to me.

I saw the two pictures as clearly as if they had been painted on the wall before me. I saw more — my duty. Not my duty to myself any longer; I thought no longer of that. I had seen my duty to him.

"Mr. Worboise," I said, "I will go with you and find him."

. . . . . .

Sitting on the narrow deck of the little steam-launch *Ela,* as it rocked about in the swell of the dreaded Gulf, I looked at the coast-line ahead, and wondered if I could still be in Papua — Papua of the fine plantation houses, and rich rubber lands; of the jeweled seas and enameled skies; of the stately pillared palms and bright coral beaches. I had never imagined or heard of anything even remotely resembling what I saw before me; and I must confess it struck me with a sensation of something very like fear.

We were right down in the Gulf country now, among the uncharted coasts, and the unknown rivers, within touch of an area as large as all England wherein no white man had ever yet set foot. A little way up one or two of the rivers — a few miles inland from the shores, here and there — armed expeditions had cautiously penetrated, at rare intervals, and had returned not always as they went. Most of the country, however, was unvisited and unknown, inhabited only by the notoriously wild and fierce cannibal tribes of the West and determinedly hostile to any invasion from outside.

Mr. Worboise had told me all this during the run down from Port Moresby, which had taken the best part of a week, he sleeping under the deck awning with our six native "boys," I inhabiting the tiny, uncomfortable, beetle-haunted cabin of the launch. He had told me also that he had good reason to suppose Hugh was somewhere in the Purari Delta country, since he and Worboise himself had gone through it on a sago-getting expedition a good many years ago,

and they were the only white men in New Guinea who really knew the place, or could find their way about in it. The natives, it seemed, had treated them favorably on the whole, and were not likely to attack us, if we took good care of what we said and did — especially as my presence would be interpreted as a sign of peaceful intent.

"There's never no mischief about when they 'ave their own women out," said Mr. Worboise, the day before we started, "and they take it to be the same way with us, I reckon, or would take it — there's never been a white woman seen within a 'undred miles of this place. I'll get you through all right, Mrs. Hugh; what I don't know about them man-eaters ain't worth knowing, and I tell you, as no doubt I've told you hoften" (he had) "that they ain't 'alf bad fellers when you get to know them. But you'll 'ave to be guided by me in heverything, once we get down into the Delter, and don't you be frightened at nothin' you see; most times there's no need of bein' frightened, and hall times there's no good."

I promised courage with a shrinking heart, for indeed, the account of the Delta terrified me, and the preparations Mr. Worboise made for our start in Port Moresby alarmed me still more. The steam-launch which we hired was an old one, and badly in need of repair here and there, but my guide chose her in preference to an oil launch of superior make and speed, partly because we could use wood fuel in case of emergency, and partly (to my dismay) because she had been fitted at one time with high sheet-iron bul-

warks, designed as a protection against arrows, on some such trip as this.

Then, when our stores were on board, and my one tiny box was placed in the cabin, he embarked six Papuans to act as crew and guard, all armed with rifles and bandoliers of cartridges, that gave the expedition an unpleasantly war-like appearance. His own rifle, loaded, was kept in the cabin; he warned me to be careful in handling it; and he brought down a revolver on the day of our start, which he hung beside my mirror.

"That's for you, Mrs. Hugh," he said. "I'll teach you to use it on the way down; it's an 'undred to one you'll never want it, but still, one doesn't take no chances, not even 'undred to ones, on this kind of a trip."

Withal, he was so perfectly cool and unexcited about the whole business, that I, remembering I was now in a pioneer country, where much more was expected of women than in the safe, settled lands far away on the other side of the world — remembering, too, that I was married to a brave man, and must not prove myself unworthy of him — did the best I could to conceal the terrors from which I certainly suffered. It was not difficult: Mr. Worboise's spirit, old as he was, was that of the true Empire-maker and breaker-in of new lands — it counted cowardice as a thing impossible, either in himself or others, given sufficient cause for the display of courage.

But that afternoon, when we lay outside the mouths of the great Purari River, waiting for the flood tide

to take us over the bar, I had need of all my new spirit, and perhaps a little more. For the place weighed strangely on my mind.

We were lying in the center of a huge plain of livid yellow water, with a livid yellow sky, hot as burning brass, above us. In front of us, a long way off, stretched a level-topped, unbroken rampart, black against the sky, and dropping sheer into the sea without a trace of shore-line. This colossal wall, apparently a hundred feet in height or more, wound in and out as far as the eye could reach, following every curve of the island, and hiding everything that lay behind. I cannot describe the appearance of secrecy and defiance that it gave to this unknown, unvisited coast whither our strange errand had led us.

"What is it, Mr. Worboise?" I asked nervously. "That great wall — I don't understand it — and where is the river?"

"Lord bless you, Mrs. Hugh, that's nothin' but the mangroves," answered Mr. Worboise, lifting his head from the engine-hole (I cannot call it a room) where he was busy tinkering away at the little engine. "All this coast is mangrove and swamp. Trees, you understand. They grows as close as 'airs in an 'air-brush, and the towns, they're 'id among the trees and the swamps, and the rivers, so's you'd never know there wasn't none there, if you didn't 'ave the luck to 'it them."

"Is that inhabited?" I asked in amazement, looking at the lifeless, stirless wall and the far-reaching tableland of closely massed tree tops behind.

"In'abited? Why, it's the most in'abited place in the country; wait till you see."

The engine was going now, and the tide had risen almost to flood; we were steaming cautiously over the shallow waters of the bar, getting nearer to the mighty mangrove wall. As we approached, an opening began to show itself right in our course — widening and growing with every revolution of the screw — the opening of the tremendous stream from which poured out the yellow flood that colored the sea for miles and miles, and turned the salt waters of the Gulf to fresh, out of sight of land.

"That's one of the Purari mouths," said Mr. Worboise.

A Papuan was driving the engine now, and my guide was at the wheel, keeping a cautious eye ahead for the floating tree-trunks, immense masses of timber as solid as steel, that came charging out into the bay on the current of the river, constantly threatening to ram the sides of our fragile little vessel. We were getting into the stream; the mangrove wall was parting right and left of us, as the sea parted before the Israelites, and almost as miraculously. A hundred feet on each side of us it stood up, close-massed trunks set in black gleaming water, without a sign of land. Beyond the wall, clumps of a strange water-palm sprang straight up out of the river, like bunches of ostrich plumes twenty and thirty feet high. These, and the mangroves, and the skimming logs, and the white cockatoos that flew screaming out of the trees at our approach, were all mirrored line for line in the wide glit-

tering stretch of water, which was colored citron-green.

To my astonishment, I found it beautiful, and said so. We crept steadily up the river, against the immense, invisible current, and now there was something like land to be seen — black, swampy stuff, sloping abruptly down to the stream, with the gleam of water behind and through it in a million places. Wherever this land appeared, the display of foliage was so marvelous that I could find no words to express my wonder. Rank with an unwholesome luxuriance, green with a venomous brilliance of color, it fairly flung itself at the water — a tangle of leaves sword-like, fan-like, snake-like, fern-like, finger-like, flag-like; an army of trunks scaled like alligators, or spined like porcupines, or splashed with gouts of unaccountable blood-like hues; a tangle of reptilian creepers, twisting and choking and coiling round every branch and no flowers, no colors, nothing but the poisonous green of the forest, and the liquid green of the river, and over all, the thunderous, low-hanging, threatening sky.

All that morning we steamed up the endless river reaches, our panting little engine breaking the deadly silences with its steady throb, our screw leaving a sharply marked wake across the unbroken mirror of the stream. I could not imagine how my companion found his way, for the place was like nothing on earth but Hampton Court Maze magnified a million times, and turned to colossal rivers, separated by walls of primeval forest. Here and there a great lagoon opened out, with scores of rivers and streams debouch-

ing into it on every side, all apparently alike, and steaming black flats of mud, where more than once we caught a glimpse of an alligator sliding his huge body into the concealing water, without a sound or a splash. Across the open spaces the *Ela* made her way without hesitation, my guide appearing to know by instinct the right opening to take, where all looked alike, and all were equally unsuggestive of leading to anywhere at all. And still, never a sound save the crying of the cockatoos, or a sign of life in all the forests, or on all the lonely banks. We seemed to have found chaos again — the earth as it was before the creation of man, or before the land was separated from the waters.

In the afternoon the steamy heat, shut in by dense walls of foliage, grew so overpowering that I lay down in the shade of the awning, and half dozed away. I do not know how long I lay there, but I was roused very suddenly, and sprang to my feet half awake. What I saw drove every vestige of sleep from my eyes at once.

Out of a mere narrow trench in the greenery of the banks, from somewhere in the interior of the swamp, two long canoes had shot, filled with naked men who were howling like demons. Each of them wore an immense halo of colored parrot plumes set upright about his head, and all the faces were horribly painted, with staring block circles about the eyes, and scarlet streaks and patches on the features. A peculiarly fierce and beast-like expression was produced by the white tusks they wore thrust through their noses. They were fine, muscular men, and paddled far faster than the

launch could go, in their narrow dug-out canoes which were painted to imitate a huge water-snake. They all carried bows and arrows, and looked the wildest and wickedest creatures that any imagination could picture outside of hell.

"Mr. Worboise!" I said, scarce able to speak, and clutching tightly to the rail.

But he had seen them as soon as myself.

"They're all right, Mrs. Hugh," he said, cheerfully. "That's not their war-bows and spears they've got, only their 'untin' houtfit."

"Why are they howling so?" I gasped, as the canoes came nearer and nearer to the *Ela,* making a noise like a dog-show in full swing.

"Why, they're 'owlin' at you; they've never seen a white woman before, and they're mazed," he explained. "Come a little nearer and show yourself, if you don't mind."

I minded extremely, but I approached the side on which the canoes were following, and looked over the rail. The effect was amazing. One canoe-full of warriors, whose feathers and equipments were slightly different from those of the others, stopped yelling for a moment, fixed a concentrated and unanimous glare upon my face, and then, raising a yelp that could have been heard a mile away, turned tail and darted up a small side stream into the recesses of the swamp, paddling for their lives. For a long time after, dismal wails from the swamp mingled with shrieks of fiendish laughter, delivered by the men of the remaining canoe. Old Mr. Worboise joined heartily in the laughter.

"Just wot I thought," he said, wiping his eyes. "Them's a reel wild bushman lot, and the sight of you 'as frightened them out of their lives. This lot's Maipuans; we're gettin' in to the town."

"What town?"

"Why, Maipua; it's the best place to begin inquirin' about. Last year, the Maipuans would have eat you and me as sure as I'd heat a hoyster; but the new Government, it's 'ad a couple of patrols down here lately, and the Maipuans, which is as cute as pet foxes, is seein' what way the cat jumps now, and they'd not touch us, without we were to hannoy them. There, didn't I tell you? — there's Maipua. Now if we don't 'ear some sort of news here, it'll be all out of my reckonin'. Reel gossips these Maipuans is; there ain't a halligator speared in the Delter, or a skull 'ung up in a temple, but they knows all about it."

I hardly heard him, for my eyes were struck at the moment by the strangest sight, indeed, they are ever likely to view before the grave darkens down upon them forever.

Maipua lay before us. For nearly a mile, the great still river, with its banks of oozy mud, and its background of flaming green, was hemmed in by the buildings of the chief town of the Purari Delta — such buildings as no language could describe, no pen do justice to. The place was like a nightmare of the wildest and most terrifying kind — that, and nothing else.

Under the black, lowering sky that so constantly hangs above the Delta country, the houses sprang from

the slimy ooze to an enormous height — fifty, seventy, a hundred feet, each one flinging up a huge pointed horn-like gable right into the thunderous purple clouds. Beneath these gables the open fronts of the houses gaped like jaws of some lurking beast of prey, sloping backwards and inwards with an angle exactly like that of a throat. Behind, the long trailing body of the house slipped back to hide itself among the swamps and creeks of the banks. It was just as if a company of hideous monsters, open-mouthed for prey, had camped themselves close along the shores of the river ready to snap up anything that passed. The resemblance was too close to be accidental; I am sure it is part of the fierce humor of these people to build their houses in this amazing form.

In front of almost every house was a platform, overhanging the river bank, and on each of these platforms stood and squatted crowds of brown naked men, gayly painted and feathered. A few women, clad only in bark aprons, were to be seen passing to and fro through the morass on which all the houses were built, walking with wonderful ease and lightness over the fragile stick bridges that connected the different parts of the town. I remembered what Mr. Worboise had said about the presence of the women denoting safety, and felt much relieved to see these ugly, unwomanlike creatures, for, in spite of my guide's assurances, I found it hard to believe that the companies of feathered and painted warriors drawn up on the platforms of the houses were not to be feared.

We anchored for the night out in the middle of the

stream, and Mr. Worboise and the Port Moresby natives took turns keeping watch till dawn. I slept ill in spite of fatigue; every splash in the river suggested horrors to me, and I was unspeakably relieved to see the dawn — a red and angry one — creep through the windows of the cabin, and spill like a stream of blood over my white dressing gown, while the parrots waked in the dense marshy forests outside, and came screaming and flying up out of the lurid east.

After breakfast we went ashore together, leaving the boys in charge of the launch. Fortunately, the natives had shown themselves very shy of approaching it, being evidently of the opinion that it was some kind of a devil, spitting fire and smoke. Even the brave paddlers who had escorted us into Maipua the evening before, had been careful to keep at least fifty or sixty yards away.

We landed on a bank of black slime, bridged by rough logs, and took our way through the swamp to the largest of the houses. My wonder grew with every step. It was in such a land as this, then, that Hugh had hidden himself away — in surroundings such as these — and he had not gone mad, or died of horror. . . . Should I be able to say as much, if our search proved to be a long one? I doubted it.

The first house that we entered stood on piles about ten feet high, and was reached by a steep ladder of tree-branches. The formidable crew collected on the platform made no objection to letting us pass. Mr. Worboise spoke to them in their tongue; they seemed to know him, and had evidently no ill intent.

We entered under the tremendous arch of the hundred foot gable, accompanied by a tall man who seemed to be something of a chief, and passed out of the rays of the burning sun into a sudden dim coolness that was very refreshing. I looked about me with wonder and fear. The house seemed to run back for a very long distance, three or four hundred feet, at least, rapidly sloping downwards. Long curtains of brown fiber hid the farther end. The nearer part was decorated with every kind of horror that an imagination crazed with drink or fear could have suggested — only these things were real. Human skulls hung in strings from the supporting pillars of the house. Grinning jaws of alligators met the eye in every dusky corner. Black shields carved with skeleton-white figures of monstrous things with faces half human, half crab or shark or pig, flanked the center pathway in serried rows. Daggers made of human thigh-bones hung upon the walls, war-bows, arrows, and ebony-wood spears hideously-barbed, were stacked in the corners. The skull of a man, carved into fret-work patterns, and fitted with an artificial snout of bone that made it look half pig, half devil, was suspended by a string in our pathway. A large cooking-bowl of dark fire-clay, heavily stained with grease, rolled right over my foot as I passed it, and I almost screamed. . . .

We stopped before the great drop-curtain that cut off the inner part of the house; beyond that, Mr. Worboise told me, no white man would be permitted to advance. What might lie in the Unholy of Unholies at

the end, could only be guessed. Instant death would probably be the penalty of trying to find out.

Here, then, we held our talk. My guide presented the chief with several sticks of tobacco, a tomahawk, and a yard or two of red calico, gifts that seemed to please him greatly. Some of them were passed through my hands, for Mr. Worboise said that the natives regarded me with fear and horror, as an unnatural thing that they had never seen nor heard of, and it was as well to dissipate the impression, if we were to win their good will.

. . . Shall I confess that I actually felt a throb of mortified vanity at this? It was indeed a new experience for me to find every eye turned away from me, or regarding me, at best, with disgusted curiosity. These malodorous savages, with their truculent faces and gory, betel-stained jaws, drew back as from some unknown horror when I passed near them. . . . If they had only known how very much more afraid I was of them, than they could possibly be of me!

Mr. Worboise talked and talked on, and the men of Maipua answered, slowly and sullenly for the most part. I could not understand a word, but my instinct told me that things were not going as well as might be wished. The questions grew longer, the answers sullener and shorter. Outside, beyond the cool shadow of the great "ravi" (as the houses were named) the sun beat down upon the fathomless black slime and the poisonous green creepers and trailers, raising horrible exhalations into the dead, damp, heat-soaked air. A long way off, a thin metallic sound of voices chant-

ing made itself heard, coming slowly nearer and nearer.

Mr. Worboise stopped at last, and rubbed his hand across his dripping forehead.

"No good, Mrs. Hugh," he said. "Let's be gettin' on."

They did not stand aside to let us pass, and we had to push a way to the platform outside, through their evil-smelling painted bodies. I did not much like this, nor, I saw, did my companion. The truth was, I was sick with terror, and had been so all the morning. This last touch was almost too much, and I started to run across the platform to the dingy. But Mr. Worboise gripped my arm.

"Don't do that; there's no trouble, if you don't go for to make it," he said.

The chanting sound was coming nearer, round the bend of the river. It was close at hand now. We got into the dingy quickly, but without haste, and pushed off, both, I think, heaving a sigh of relief when it became evident that no objection to our departure would be made. And at that moment, the source of the music became visible.

Down the river came a huge raft, so freighted with waving leaves and branches that it looked like a piece of forest afloat. It had a crowd of wild-eyed naked men aboard, decked out in feathers and grasses, so that they fluttered all over with every movement. In the center of the raft was a kind of pyre, upon which lay something wrapped up in leaves — something long and shapeless. The warriors, urging the raft along, sang

a wild, fierce, brassy chant as they swung to their paddles, and paused at rhythmic intervals to shake a spear or a bunch of bristling arrows at the formless thing they ferried.

"In God's name, what is it?" I asked, my hand clenched tight on my companion's sleeve.

No answer came for a minute. Then I heard Mr. Worboise heave a sigh of relief.

"It's only a pig — this time," he said. "Don't be afraid to look. It ain't always . . ."

For the first time since I had known him, he bit a cannibal reference off before it had reached his lips.

The raft passed quite near us as we rowed out to the launch again, but not a soul on board took the slightest notice of us. They seemed rapt in a kind of hideous ecstasy, absorbed in the booming bellow of their chant. For a long time after the raft passed us, and disappeared round the next bend of the stream, we could hear the horrid sound, growing gradually faint in the distance.

Mr. Worboise got up steam at once, and in a few minutes we were panting down the river again, with the great devil-horns of the Maipuan houses pricking into the brassy sky behind us, and the wide green reaches of the Purari opening out before.

I came to him where he was standing at the wheel.

"You got no good news," I said.

"No," he answered heavily. "Truth is, Mrs. Hugh, the Delter seems hup a bit. They was rather sorry in the ravi, and they wouldn't tork about Hugh, except to say they 'adn't 'eard nothing about him,

which is a lie on the face of it. Never you mind, we'll 'ear somethin' to-morrow, if I can find the place I want."

He turned the wheel in his hands, and swept round the bend. A waft of cool air from the wider reaches blew across the deck, and the natives who were squatted near us, ostentatiously cleaning their rifles, raised their heads and snuffed the freshness with delight.

It was good to be out in the free, safe river again; but my mind felt heavy.

CHAPTER XIV

WHEN I look back upon that time of adventure and peril in the Delta, I almost wonder if, in truth, it ever happened — if the whole tale is more than the recollection of a dream, dreamed in the thunderous midnight hours of the hot season, when the tide of life runs low, and the mind is attuned to strange and terrible fancies. Even while we were traveling through it, the whole country seemed to me incredible and unreal. Nothing was actual but the little handful of known and familiar things contained within the oval of the *Ela's* bulwarks,— the ill-smelling, beetle-haunted cabin, our six Papuan boys, who sat singing and drum-beating on the deck all day long, to pass the time, the puffing funnel and the chattering engine — these were the only rocks to which my mind could cling in a shifting sea of things unheard-of, incomprehensible, terrifying. And yet, in a way, I became used to he life.

When we had been three days tracking and threading the mazes of this most wonderful place, I felt as if the Stephanie of London days, who used to be seen in and out of cabs, and met at suburban railway stations, never had existed, and as if this new Stephanie who periled her life so readily, went ashore with a loaded revolver stuck in the belt of her dress, and

looked without emotion at garlands of human skulls and necklaces of human teeth, was the real woman after all. Something of what Carlyle would call "husks and wrappages" had been stripped away in those few days; what was left was the real me, and I knew that, being thus found, it would never be lost again.

We had trouble finding Doravi, the town to which Mr. Worboise wanted to go, after leaving Maipua. It was in the center of the sago country, and for this reason he thought we were likely to find Hugh there, or at least to hear of him, since sago-getting was the only source of income in the Purari. We knew now for certain that he was in the Delta: the determined silence of the natives had told us so much.

I was puzzled to know why Mr. Worboise had not tried to obtain information from the men on the raft; but he told me that was impossible.

"Not when you know as much of these people as I do, you wouldn't hinterrupt them in the middle of a religious ceremony," he said, "which that was one we seen, or part of one — without you was pretty tired of livin'. And hanyway, judgin' by the way they Maipuans be'aved in that there ravi, we'd 'ave 'eard nothin'. Seems as if the word 'as gone out in the Delter not to talk to houtsiders about hanything."

"What does that mean?" I asked, with beating heart.

"Might mean anythin', or nothin'. Now look there, Mrs. Hugh, there's somethin' reel pretty for you," evaded my guide, pointing to the bank, and though I

feared he was concealing something from me, I allowed my attention to be distracted for the moment.

"That's the D'Alberti creeper," he said. "See it comin' down like a waterfall that's bin turned to big red flowers, right from the top of the trees to the water; 'undred feet and over, I'd guess it. There ain't many flowers 'ere, but what there is is worth lookin' at."

All morning and all afternoon the *Ela* ran on just as she had run the day before, panting noisily through the breathless silences of the tangled river-maze, where never another sound broke the deathly stillness, save the sudden screaming of a frightened bird, or far in the distance, down some unknown water-lane, the booming bellow of an alligator. The beauty of the foliage on the banks, and the mirror-like reflections in the citron-green water; the exquisite passing glimpses of inner lake sanctuaries, reached by arcades of palm and orchid, and strewn with feathery green islets — the magnificent stretch and sweep of the great main currents, Amazons, Mississippis, Danubes, Zambesis, all flowing within a few hundred yards of one another, and joined by countless lesser channels — I could never hope to describe. Dimly and wonderingly, I began to understand how this amazing place must have called to the wild instincts of the man with whose strange fate my fragile, frivolous life had been so incongruously linked. . . . Surely, in a country that is the very home of the impossible, nothing more astonishing than the tale of our love had ever come about!

Sago palms grew thickly on the banks — tall, handsome trees with coronets of green fronds, and scaly trunks marked like the skin of a snake. I asked Mr. Worboise about the tree, and he told me of its wonderful stores of nourishment — of the white mass of pith that was concealed by the shell-like trunk, food for a man for many months, once it was taken out, beaten, washed and dried, so as to extract the nourishing starch and leave the fiber behind,— of the fine-flavored jellies that could be made from it, perfect in taste and in strengthening properties, when eaten with cocoanut cream; of the total unlikeness of the real article to the insipid stuff sold in civilized shops.

"What the trade does with the sago they buys I wouldn't hundertake to say," he observed. "Likely mixes a hounce of it to a ton of pertater starch, and passes it off as reel. But us who lives in sago countries, we knows what good food it is. You'd never starve in the Delter, not so long as you'd a tommy'awk and your two 'ands. I've always known there was money in it, and so has others, but where the sago is, there's the cannibal lot too, and they're not heasy to trade with, let alone that you never know they won't turn on you and make a stoo of you, if they takes a prejudice again you.

"Don't you forget, dealin' with cannibals," he went on, "that they're as nervish as a school-gurl of sixteen, and as scary as a young 'orse that isn't broke — more so; you'd find it 'ard to think of anything, animal or 'uman, that is as nervish and scary. You seen that before; they was all on the jump all the time the

hother day. You see, when a feller lives constant in fear of bein' clubbed and put in the cookin' pot, it destroys 'is carmness, like, and 'e gets into a state that would mean Fellers's Surrup, and no tobacco nor drinks, and go to bed at height, if 'e was a white man and consulted a doctor about it. When a cannibal kills someone, 'e does it for one of two reasons — either because 'e's frit of bein' killed 'imself, or because 'e's got into such a peculiar nervish state that 'e don't know what he's doin' any'ow, and goes for the first thing he sees. There's other reasons now and then, but they 'appen so seldom you may leave them out. . . ."

The speech was never finished. From out a narrow waterway, almost invisible in the dense tangle of greenery, flashed the nose of a canoe — out, and back again, almost before it had been seen. There was just the least ripple of the glass-green water, just the slightest quiver of the overhanging fronds of palm, and then — not a sign, not a sound. The river was void of life once more.

"That's as good as a map of the districk and tourists' guide to the towns," said Mr. Worboise with some satisfaction. "Now I'm beginnin' to guess where we are. 'Tisn't that I don't know the channels, or some of them, but they doesn't stay the same; lots of them has altered since Hugh and I was here together, and Doravi seems as if it's been and lost itself. But it can't be far off now; them fellers in the canoe who scooted so quick was comin' out by one of the back doors. The 'ole Delter's full of towns you can't see

and wouldn't suspicion; it's not 'alf as dead as it looks. You see, we'll make Doravi before sundown."

We did. It was still quite light when the steam-launch swept round a corner masked by an immense clump of nipa or water-palms, and came into view of a town that, in its own way, was still more wonderful than Maipua.

Nothing less than a New Guinea Venice lay before us. The river on which the town was built was very wide, and dark green with depth. There was no real land at all; only an occasional gleam of black, semi-liquid mud among the lianas and water-palms at the edges of forest, showed where the trees took root. The houses were of the same extraordinary, alligator-mouth shape as those of Maipua, but smaller; they stood on high piles right in the clear green water, and the streets and alleys were all water-paved. Curious verandas clung to the sides of these quaint brown houses, and their horn-shaped gables were lost in the thick of the over-hanging boughs above. From place to place, over principal side streams, light bridges of woven vines and creepers were thrown. It was the greenest, wateriest, leafiest, stillest place we had yet seen. Not a sound broke the ghostly quiet. The platforms of the ravis were filled with warriors, painted, feathered and armed to the teeth; but they squatted there like lifeless images, each in his own place, and moved nothing but their beady eyes. Children in canoes paddled soundlessly in and out of the dusk side streams over which the liana bridges swayed and shook; a gleaming streak upon the black water of a

scarcely seen lagoon showed where an alligator swam, all hidden but the cruel eyes; from the branches of one of the heaviest and darkest trees a pendulous snake head, joined to ten feet of diamond-patterned body, swung to and fro above the stream. . . . Beautiful, silent, evil, the creature seemed the very spirit of the place.

We came to a halt, keeping well out in the middle of the river, and Mr. Worboise began to look about him.

"It's Doravi right enough," he said, with a hand on the steering-wheel, "but I must say the Doravi fellers don't look much like what I seen them last. Nervish they was to what you couldn't describe it, worse than them Maipuans — skippin' and 'owlin' and runnin' away in canoes, when they see Hugh and me; now to-day they looks as if they was all drunk on betel-nut, or all gone dotty, or somethink; I can't himagine —"

At that moment his eyes fell on an object prominently displayed on one of the platforms overhanging the water, and for the first time, I saw him change color.

I looked at the thing, and did not like it, though it was simply a wickerwork figure, of a kind I had not seen in any of the houses yet — a huge, dragon-like creature, with red eyes, a trailing tail, and short, stumpy legs. It had an enormous mouth, gaping wide open, and there seemed to be something inside — what, I could not see.

I turned to Mr. Worboise, with a new kind of fear creeping over me. (I had known little save fear since

we entered this awful country of the Purari, but never till now had I felt such a crawling of the roots of the hair, such a grip of the heart, as seized me when I looked at that grisly thing on the platform.)

"Mr. Worboise," I whispered, for I was afraid to speak aloud —"what is it?"

He turned on me a face that had suddenly grown pale.

"God forgive me, Mrs. Hugh," he whispered in reply, "but who could 'a thought of this? Doravi's makin' the 'sempsi.'"

"What?"

"The 'sempsi.' No one rightly knows what it is, but it's one of their devil ceremonies that takes place only once in seven years, and if they was as peaceable as lambs at hother times, they'd be wolves then, for they don't allow no white folks to see any of it and live. . . . My eyes isn't quite what they was, Mrs. Hugh; will you look about and tell me if you sees any women or girl children in them canoes?"

I saw none, and told him so, with the tide of cold fear creeping ever higher and higher about my heart. All the figures on the platforms were men; all the children gliding about in the canoes were boys — boys with dark, devilish little faces, and not a trace of childishness about them, full as cruel as their seniors. Fascinated with horror, but as yet unable to realize the danger, I glanced once more at the sinister thing on the platform nearest to us. . . . What did it conceal in those gaping jaws?

The answer was not long in coming.

Something was dripping into the river from under the wickerwork monster's stumpy limbs. Something was trickling down its hideous belly, staining the platform red. . . .

I knew.

Mr. Worboise had seen it too. His large flat face showed no fear, but the livid color increased as he made a quick gesture with his hand to the boy who acted as engineer. Then he gripped the steering-wheel closely, and threw a rapid glance ahead.

One minute earlier — half-a-minute — and the course of all our lives had been changed. But the delay had been too long.

The engine throbbed, the propeller turned — the *Ela* worked slowly round in her tracks and headed down the stream. Fascinated still with terror, I gazed at those hideous ranks on the platforms. Were they going to let us go without a word — us, who had seen what no white man, and no woman, white or brown, might look upon and live?

They did not move. The whites of their eyes, clearly visible within the scarlet-painted circles about the sockets, showed moveless and unwinking in the shadow of the yawning gables behind. They were all looking — where? — at what?

Again the question was answered. The *Ela* had scarce made twenty yards on the way towards safety and the open stream, when, with the suddenness of a stage transformation, the whole channel in front of us filled up with a crowd of war-canoes, issuing with incredible swiftness from numberless unseen waterways,

and a yell that struck through me like a knife resounded in the hollow arcade of overhanging trees. Nor did it cease, once begun. A continuous torrent of wild, dog-like yelps poured forth without end from every throat, while a thousand paddles, beating the water into foamy spray, drove the army of canoes down the channel straight at the launch. The speed of the paddlers made every canoe leap and quiver; the naked, painted bodies rose and fell like the jumpers inside a piano. All the feathers and streamers that they wore — all the arrows and spears they carried — shook and flew and trembled with the fury of their flight. And all the time they yelped and yelled, like hell itself let loose.

I was so giddy with terror that I have no very clear recollection of the minutes that followed. I know that Mr. Worboise thrust me into the cabin, crying, "Lie down on the floor," and that almost instantly the sound of rifle shots rang out above the awful tumult of the savage horde. The yelling checked somewhat, but began again almost at once, and I heard a pattering volley of arrows strike on the iron bulwarks and all over the deck. A cry from one of our own men told me they had not missed their mark. Then the rifles rang out again, mingled with shrieks from our boys, and calls from Mr. Worboise — "Stand to them, stand to them — shoot him, Kabua! Mirani, fire!" Then a thundering of feet all over the deck, and a chorus of yells compared with which the former cries had been nothing — a frantic stamping and scuffling — more rifle-shots — Mr. Worboise's

voice again—"Keep her off, keep her off, Mirani! Damn you, we're aground!"—a shock that vibrated through the whole launch, and the sickening quiver of the propeller choked by mud—the continuing—good God, would they never end? was everyone killed?—and at the last, the crowning horror of all—a dozen naked painted bodies struggling to enter the cabin all together; a forest of hideous arms seizing me at all at once, fruitless struggling on my part overborne, useless screams drowned by savage howls—the sunlight of the open deck burning on my face, the sudden shock of a fall on the planks, as my hands were seized and my feet snatched from under me, and rudely tied together, and the knowledge that the fight was lost, and we were prisoners.

The yelling still went on; it confused my brain so much that I could hardly think, and no doubt I felt the horror of the situation somewhat less on that account. I saw that Mr. Worboise was lying on the deck also, tied hand and foot, and bleeding from a wound in the arm. I saw that two of our own boys were dead, and the rest missing. There were several of the savages lying shot across their canoes, and a splashing and floundering out in the river, where a long scaly tail rose and lashed the water now and then, told of the fate of others. The launch was stuck fast on a mudbank, and the engine had ceased to work.

I think I must have been half stunned when they flung me down on the deck, for I do not remember anything very clearly afterwards, until I felt myself being carried up the ladder of the biggest ravi, and

into the gloom under the great roof. Then my sense came back, and I looked about with almost frantic attention, wildly hoping for a chance to escape.

They carried Mr. Worboise and myself down the endless tunnel of the great house, the roof growing lower and lower before us as we advanced, the sunlight waxing dimmer. Curtain after curtain was lifted and brushed aside; mystery after mystery appeared, dimly seen in the growing dusk, and faded away again. I do not know to this day if the giant snakes that swung from the rafters were living or dead. I cannot tell what the nightmare forms, toothed and winged and finned, that flashed by in some dim recess, may have been — whether, indeed, I saw them at all, or only pictured them, in the terror of a semi-crazed brain. I know that I saw a drinking-cup made of a skull, and filled to the brim with blood, set on a kind of altar a long way down in the ravi, where an opening in the roof let in a ray of sun that smote down on the horrors below like the fire that fell from heaven upon the idolaters of long ago. I know that there was a smell of death in the air, and that skeleton hands, with the flesh withering away, brushed against us as we were carried past, and when the end of the terrible journey neared, and the last curtain was lifted, that a flight of hideous bats, with fox-like heads and huge whirring wings, flapped their way out of the inner recess of the ravi above our head and flew away down the dark tunnel, looking like evil spirits unchained. . . .

They were taking us to the secret shrine — the

"Unholy of Unholies," on which no white man or woman might look, and live thereafter. Only too well we could guess why its mysteries were unveiled for us.

Within the last curtain, our bearers flung us down on the rickety palm-sheath floor, and left us. Their cries of derision echoed all through the huge nave of the building, as they ran yelping and howling down the ravine again, and left us to ourselves.

For several minutes, neither of us spoke, and then I turned my head, which was all I could move, to Mr. Worboise, and asked him was he badly hurt.

"No, no — nothin' but a prick of an arrer. 'Ave they 'urt you, Mrs. Hugh?" he asked anxiously.

I reassured him as well as I could, but the poor old man groaned bitterly.

"Oh, Lord forgive me that ever I brought you to such a pass, Mrs. Hugh — and me that would 'ave laid down my life that willin' to save you — and me that persuaded you into comin' and all — but there, 'oo was to know that we'd 'it on the one time in seven years when no one can't do nothin' with them? All over the West, that sempsi business is, but some 'as it at one time, and some at another, and the last thing I'd ever 'a thort was that we'd 'it on it here, for they don't take near so much count of it in the Delter as they do about the Fly River country. A 'undred thousand to one chance it was, and it's 'it us."

"What will they do with us?" I asked, trying to keep the tremble out of my voice. I had been so

continually frightened ever since we entered the Delta country, that it seemed as if my capacity for fear was getting more or less worn out, and I only felt vaguely nervous now.

Mr. Worboise was silent.

"I tell you all that'll 'appen to you," he said at last, "and that'll be, gettin' struck on the 'ead with that empty revolver of yours" (it was indeed empty; I could only guess that, in my blind terror in the cabin, I had fired off every cartridge without knowing or remembering what I did), "and dyin' quick and easy, before you 'as time to feel anythin'. No worse, Mrs. Hugh. You can trust to me for that."

"And you?" I said.

But he pretended not to hear, rolling over on the creaking floor so as to drown my voice.

"Better not think too much, if we're to keep our 'eads clear," he said. "Look round you, now you're in 'ere after all, and see what it is they keeps in this place. Maybe we won't 'ave the chance to tell, but we may as well see."

We looked, and saw. I cannot say either of us felt much interest in the unraveling of mysteries that were like to cost us our lives, but all the same we took note of our surroundings.

It was the end of the ravi, where its three or four hundred feet of length and towering height abruptly terminated in a small, sloped chamber, dimly lit by an aperture under the gable of the low roof. Everything was dusty and brown — the woven palm-leaf

walls, the palm-sheath floor, the fiber curtain that shut off the shrine from the tunnel beyond. Long arrows of powdery gold sifted in here and there though the roof, and showed the floating particles of dust in the still air. There were no skulls here, no human-bone daggers, no nightmare-painted shields — nothing at all but a grim circle of wickerwork dragons, seven of them, all open-jawed and red-eyed like the dragon we had seen on the platform outside, but, unlike it, empty. How long they might remain empty — with what food their hideous maws might be fed — neither my companion nor I cared to speculate. Nor did we try to picture to ourselves the scenes on which these silent walls had many a time looked down. In truth — I speak for myself, and, I think, for my companion too — we thought as little as we could about anything at all, lest our minds should give way under the strain of the weight that had been laid upon them, and leave us with not even the last consolations of all — courage and prayer.

The lances of dusty gold grew dim and died away; the evening calls of parrots and cockatoos sounded from the woody swamps outside. Smells of smoke arose from the houses; on the river the sound of canoe paddles beat up and down, and cries of excitement mingled with the beating of the village drums. Night came, but wearied though we were, there was no sleep for us. We spoke but little; our hearts were too heavy. Old Mr. Worboise rolled over on the floor and sighed from time to time; as for me, I

watched the silent stars through a little crevice in the roof — they seemed to give me courage — and prayed to Him Who made the stars, that even now, He would deliver us out of the mouth of hell.

PART III

LYNCH'S STORY

CHAPTER XV

I HAD had many homes, in many quarters of the world, but none that held my fancy more than that one.

Most people, I suppose, would have maintained that no sane man could possibly like to live in such a place. Most people would have been, as they usually are, wrong.

On the contrary, I should suppose that there are very many men in the world — men hurt as badly as I had been, and with as much reason for desiring a life completely free and completely secret — who have dreamed hopelessly, time and again, of just such a retreat. I used to think about them sometimes, when the dusk was coming down — that strange green dusk of the Purari, that makes the rivers, and the channels, and the wide lagoons, and the clumps of nipa and sago palm all look as if you saw them through the hollow emerald that Nero used to watch the gladiatorial games with. I would sit on my veranda, above the water, with the currents from the channels outside swirling among the twenty-foot piles, under the house, and see the last rays of the evening light disappear from the darkening agate-green of the inner lagoon that held my tiny island in its secret heart,

and hug myself to think how safely I was concealed. Outside the lagoon lay a maze of deadly swamps, deep and treacherous enough to engulf a hundred armies, and leave no trace; outside this, bewildering channels and streams that wound in and out and back and forward, and apparently led to nowhere, outside these, the three or four largest rivers of the Delta, leading, after much winding and wandering, to a coast barred by dense mangroves, and uncharted shoals and shallows, and opening at last on the waters of one of the most dangerous seas in Australasia. . . . Yes, my retirement was about as complete as human ingenuity, coupled to extraordinary geographical conditions, could make it.

I used, as I say, to think of all those other men, as I smoked alone on my veranda of an evening — the men who had "done something," or had something done to them, or who, like myself, carried both burdens. . . . Had many of them tried the relief that I had looked for and found, or had they, nearly all, contented themselves with spouting "Locksley Hall" and "gone back"— to play billiards, and buttonhole newcomers, and take short cuts out of the way, when people they didn't want to meet heaved into sight?

I suppose they had, most of them. I was made of other stuff. When I left Port Moresby jail, I wanted nothing more to do with white men, or with women, white or brown. A brown woman and a white, between them, and in different ways, had taken all the savor out of my life. White men had driven me to

crime, had punished me for committing crime, had made an outcast of me for being punished. It seemed to me that I had had enough, and a little over. I am not the kind that commits suicide, physically, but I committed it morally, when I went out into the wilderness for good, and I maintained, and still maintain, that I had ample reason.

One must live, however. Even in the wilds of Papua, a white man needs money, or its equivalent. Cartridges, flour, tea and sugar and bacon, trade stuff for the natives, clothes, books, and the hundred and one small necessities wanted by the white man who has not "gone native" in his retirement, cannot be procured for nothing. I turned sago-getter, and sold my stuff to a Malay dealer from Dutch New Guinea, who used to come down into the Gulf, from the Dutch side of the Fly River, and buy all I could send him. Then my cutter would go up to Port Moresby, and bring the goods I wanted. Garia, who was still with me, was my messenger sometimes; one of my Kiwai boys, who cut and washed the sago, took his place at times. Both kept my secret.

I had a good house in "Lynch Lagoon"—as I christened the inner lake I had chosen for my residence. It was built with a high gabled roof, and a door back and front, so that there was always coolness and a current of fresh air blowing over the palm-sheath floor, through which the green water glimmered pleasantly far below. The ladder to the veranda was of lawyer cane, and I could draw it up and down at will, making the house at any moment into a com-

plete fortress. There was no furniture except a hammock, a box, and a few mats and cooking-pots; I needed no more. But there was solitude and coolness, good food (with native sago, and fish, and fruit, wild pig, cocoanut, nipa-nut, baked yam and taro, and parrot-and-pepper stew, a man needs few civilized luxuries), hard work when I chose, and rest when I chose; all the books in the world to keep me company, if I liked to send for them, my pipe for comfort, and my boat for pleasure. More, there were adventures enough to fill a dozen volumes, did I choose to write them, among the wild tribes of the Delta, who at first resented my presence not a little and had to be brought into line, in ways that suited their savage natures, but wouldn't suit anyone who is likely to read this — so I won't describe them. I ought to have been happy, and in some degree I was. But there were pricks here and there.

I could not enjoy good novels, for one thing. A novel always has a love-story in it — nonsense about women and faith and trust, that I didn't believe in, but that, all the same, had power to trouble me. So I could only stock my book-box with detective tales and things of that kind.

I could not sing, for my own pleasure, as I had so often been used to do in old days, having a good voice, and being popular on that account among music-loving friends. Most songs, when you come to think of it, are all about lovers parting for ever, but loving each other all the same, or about homes and firesides

and children, and stuff of that kind. I didn't care for them — so I never sang.

The native women used to annoy me, too. Garia's wife had flatly declined to accompany him to the Delta, and, native fashion, had gone off and married another man, leaving him a widower — a misfortune which did not weigh at all severely upon his spirits — so there were no petticoats, even grass ones, about my place. What Garia's loves among the girls of the Delta might be, I never inquired, so long as none of them were obtruded on me. But I could not avoid the women when I went into the towns, as I did at times, and the very sight of them annoyed me. Over and over again the chiefs, who counted me a millionaire according to Purari ideas, offered me their best-looking maidens to wife, for a fixed price, in tobacco or fish-hooks or scarlet cloth, hoping to enrich their villages by the connection, and over and over again I had need of all my diplomacy to stave off serious trouble on account of my refusal. I would not have touched one of them with a ten-foot pole, if they had been as lovely as they were actually hideous. A world without women in it was what I wanted, but, as I did not require a world devoid of all population, I had to put up with the annoyance of their continued existence somewhere or other, and avoid them as best I might.

I cannot say I thought very much about Stephanie in those days. I had trained myself pretty successfully not to. The only news that I had had of her

during the years since she had left was indirect news, but not the more agreeable for that. A missionary living in an out-of-the-way division had told one of my boys that he got ten pounds a year for his mission, by simply writing now and then to tell a "gentleman in London" that I wasn't dead. Whether Stephanie herself, or the man who had always wanted to take her from me, were the moving spirit in this, I did not know, but I supposed it to be the doing of both. And I laughed to myself, to think how that meaningless piece of mummery in Port Moresby Mission Church still held three lives in its grip, tight as the alligator holds his prey, in the slime and mud of the Delta swamps.

One afternoon — I shall long remember it — I had come in early from my sago-cutting, on account of the exceptional heat, and turned into my hammock for a doze. It really was exceedingly warm. The circle of palm and pandanus and mangrove trees shutting in the glassy mirror of "Lynch's Lagoon" was so deadly still that you could not see where the dividing line between the drooping foliage in the air and its painted presentment in the water began or ended. The sky was black with heat, and the shadows had the peculiar brassy tinge that one only notices on the worst of Delta days. Real shadow, indeed, there was none, save in my house; and I was thankful to get my head beneath the grateful darkness of its roof, and lie down to rest, promising myself a dip inside

my alligator fence, as soon as the sun should have gone down.

I dozed off almost at once; the last thing I remembered was the slow lip-lap of the burning-hot water under the house and the steady crackle — like the sound of sticks in a fire — given off by the thatch of the roof, under the scorching rays of the three-o'clock sun.

It seemed to me by and by, that I woke, partly, and recognized my surroundings, but that I still continued half-asleep, and dreaming a little. I dreamed an absurd dream — that I heard the beat of a propeller.

That, of course, was quite impossible, on the Purari, and I turned myself round in the hammock with a jerk, and settled my head on the cool silk-cotton pillow. I wanted to sleep soundly, not to lie half awake and see and hear things that did not exist.

The roof crackled in the sun, a fish in the lagoon below leaped and fell with a splash. A dull bumping and thumping of far-away thunder rolled down the lonely waterways, and died away in the distance. . . . Sleepy beyond expression, I seemed to fade away with the sound, and drop down below the horizon into a gulf of infinite rest. . . .

There, again! I was almost broad awake. What nonsense! It was utterly impossible — and yet it did sound like the faint, faint beat of a propeller a very long way off — several miles at least — no louder than the throb of a man's own heart when he wakes

and listens to it in the night — the lonely, cruel night. . . .

"Garia!" I yelled to a formless heap on the floor.

"Oh!" answered my servant, waking with some difficulty, and sitting up stiffly — he was not as young as he had been; near thirty-five by now, and that is late middle-age for a native.

"You been hearem steamer?"

"Sitima, Taubada? you gammoning me!" answered the Motuan with an air of bewilderment.

I listened again, but there was nothing.

"Must have been dreaming," I said. I lay down again, and slept this time.

When I woke, it was late, and almost dark. Garia was gone out serenading, or its Papuan equivalent, in the nearest village, I had no doubt. I took my swim, keeping carefully within the fence, for Lynch's Lagoon was rather a favorite spot with egg-laying alligators — lit my lamp, found a book, and settled myself on the veranda, to wait until Garia should return and get my supper.

He was some time about it. The evening darkened into night; the moon came up from behind the circling wall of palms, and turned the water-floor of my domain to a pavement of shining pearl. Green fireflies danced about the roof of the house, and hung themselves like fairy torches all along the fringes of the thatch. Still, not a sign of Garia, and I was getting hungry.

In truth, he did not appear till nearly nine o'clock, and by that time I was so angry that I nearly kicked

him off the ladder into the lagoon, as he climbed up. I would have done so, only that I thought he was sure to clear the alligator fence in his fall, and I had more than a notion that there was a lady alligator out laying eggs in the dark, just opposite the house.

He was, of course, exceedingly apologetic, and full of explanations, as was always the case when he had outstayed his leave. I paid small heed to him; the explanations, as usual, were largely "girl," and that was a subject I barred. Ordering him to get my supper at once, and stop talking, I flung myself on a mat on the veranda, and lay there smoking and watching the moonlight spread across the lake, in a frame of mind by no means correspondent with the peace and beauty of the night.

Garia was afraid of my ill-humors when they came, and he set about his work at once, making a great clattering with the tin cooking-utensils, and blowing ostentatiously at the embers of the fire that was usually kept smoldering, native fashion, on a bed of white ashes.

I have often wondered, since, what would have happened that night, had Garia's cooking been a little less good than it was — had my ill-humor, unassuaged by a full meal, held so far as to compel him to silence. I have, just as often, flinched away from the inevitable reply.

But the food was good, though it came late, and after I had satisfied my hunger, my annoyance died down, and I beckoned with a finger to my servant. I had seen that he was bursting with some strange

piece of news, and was not averse from hearing it, after all. News is news, even in the Purari Delta.

"Where you been stop all this time?" I asked.

"Go along place plenty mud, plenty water he stop, long way, see girl belong Doravi," he began eagerly.

"Confound you and your girls," said I. "Tell the story without any girls in it, or go off to your mat and sleep. I've no doubt at all you went to see some of your girls, or that you took them more of my tobacco and tinned salmon than you'd any right to. Skip the girls, and come to the story."

"Taubada — no can tell, no tell along girl," remonstrated Garia. Then, very quickly, and watching my eye all the time —"All girl belong Doravi, he go long way away Doravi, he go walk about mud, catsing trab, sleeping 'long bush —"

"I tell you I don't care if they did."

"Taubada, you hearem me — man he maken 'sempsi' 'long Doravi, woman he go stop bush all-a-time."

"I've heard about the 'sempsi' before; it's the greatest nuisance in the West. Get me a drink, you chattering cockatoo and hold your tongue, if you can."

Garia went outside to the water-bag, and returned with a full pannikin. My mouth being temporarily closed immediately after, he seized his opportunity, and went on, fast as he could —

"That girl he makem thing Motua man he call 'aani' — he sit down, he make good sing —"

"And you paid for their singing with my tinned goods and fish-hooks, I suppose?" I said, yawning.

I was growing sleepy and it seemed easier to endure the yarn, than to stop it.

"No, I no give nobody nothing," protested Garia virtuously. "I hearum that girl sing, very good he sing, I no savvy all that-fellow Purari talk, some little-bit talk I savvy, girl he sing along 'sempsi,' he sing along boat — big boat, he say, all same rui (dugong) make noise all same rui, he come down water, going Doravi, white man all same Lineti he stop, 'nother white man no all same he stop, that fellow he gottem one leg, no two leg, he gottem breast, same woman, he gottem talk belong him, same woman, that two people, six Papua boy, he go along Doravi, woman belong Doravi he look out 'long bush, he flenty fright. By-'n'-by that woman he say that two feofle he dead, suppose he go look along Doravi, woman he flenty glad, he fright along that boat, along that feofle."

It is almost incredible, but true, that at the moment, I did not understand. The Delta is full of extraordinary yarns, largely concerned with sorcery, devils, and unbelievable apparitions of every kind, and this really sounded rather like one of the usual sort, perhaps a little more highly-colored than usual, with its one-legged, woman-breasted man, and its boat that breathed like a dugong. . . . Then, like a lightning flash, there struck into my mind that dream of the afternoon — the sound of the propeller. . . . Had it been a dream after all — and if not. . . .

God Almighty! if a white man and white woman had gone into Doravi — had gone at the time of the 'sempsi' . . .

"One leg!" Why, that was a skirt. "Talk belong woman" . . . and the rest. . . .

Once before, in my lifetime, when events were crashing about my head like stones, and past and future hung in the balance of a single minute, I had seen, by a power I cannot account for, the thing that had come to pass far away from me — had known, with the same certainty, what was about to come to pass. I saw, and knew, now. I knew who the woman was. I saw what her fate would be.

Garia has told me since that he thought I was struck with madness. There may have been some excuse for such an idea. Most of the movable things in the house took wings during the next few minutes, and flew about the walls and floor. The building trembled on its long-legged piles. The captive cockatoos I kept as night-guards to the house woke up and screamed blue ruin on the roof. . . . I was looking for something — for several things — and I wanted to find them in a hurry.

When I found them (they included a dark lantern that I used for fishing, two rifles, a couple of bandoliers of cartridges, and a small packet that I stowed carefully away in the pocket of my shirt), I took Garia by the neck, and dropped him down the ladder.

"The canoe!" I said.

Something in my manner had no doubt suggested by this time that I was in a hurry. Garia darted underneath the house, and had the canoe out almost before I was down the ladder myself.

Outside the lagoon, in a wide stream leading to the

main channel, my cutter was moored. We shot through the byways of the water-maze as the eel shoots through the roots of the nipa palms, and fairly flung ourselves on the cutter's deck. The canoe was lifted up, the sweeps got out, and we rowed and punted breathlessly through the twisting channels, out into the wind and the moonlight, and the wide waters of the open river.

Doravi lay to leeward of us, and the night-breeze was strong; the current, too, was in our favor. My cutter flew through the water, leaving a boiling wake behind her, and shipping a continuous stream of Purari river over her gunwale. But fast as she went, my thoughts went faster. Should I be in time? — should I be in time? And if I were not? . . .

"O my darling, my own lost darling — to find you and lose you like this!" I was crying out in my soul, as the cutter fled over the empty, moon-whitened waters, through the gorgeous tropic night. "Stephanie! Stephanie! what devils have made sport of your life and mine!"

. . . . . .

I knew my way well about these streams, and I knew how far the cutter could go with safety. We were still a good half-mile from Doravi when I brought to and got out into the canoe, warning Garia to wait for me, on pain of having his brains blown out if he failed.

I had taken time, in my hurried preparations, to change my light clothes for a dark shirt and trousers. Now I halted for a moment, scooped up a handful

of the river mud, and rubbed it well over my face and hands. Thus protected, I hoped to pass unseen in shadow, and as for the moonlight (which I cursed in my heart), I must keep out of it as much as possible.

Gliding silently through the intricate waterways that form the secret approach to Doravi, I came before long into a small, half-hidden stream, where, through an opening veiled with creepers, I could safely survey the town. None knew better than I that the celebration of these religious mysteries barred the way to open approach — even for me, though under ordinary circumstances I was free to pass as I liked. In the time of the "sempsi" interference from a stranger meant death.

The whole place had a marvelous appearance; if I had come on any other errand, I should have been struck with admiration. The main waterway of the town was like a fair — every house was lighted up with torches, every canoe carried a burning palm-stump, and there was bustle and movement upon all the platforms, while the gorgeousness of the feather headdresses, the elaboration of the painting on faces, limbs, and bodies, exceeded anything of the kind that I had ever seen. The tall gables of the ravis were not, as usual, open, but were filled in with huge veils of native matting, each as large as the drop-curtain of a good-sized theater. Through the curtains a dull, lurid glow shone down upon the river, and dark shadows could be seen flitting to and fro. What might be doing behind any one of those mysterious screens —

what assuredly would be doing behind most of them before the morning — I could guess, but I did not dare to picture to myself, lest I, even I, should lose the nerve that never yet had failed me.

The next question was — had the white strangers by any chance missed Doravi, or, not missing it, had they escaped?

"A steam-launch ought to have given them a chance of getting off," I said to myself, peering through the creepers, "if they . . . . Ah!"

They had not missed Doravi — nor had Doravi missed them. There was the launch, gutted of every movable, stuck fast in the mud.

I sat in my canoe, and thought, determinedly beating down the paralyzing fears that began to wind themselves like snakes about my heart. . . . If they were still alive, they would be imprisoned in the largest and most important of the ravis — probably bound and guarded, since none of the houses were solid enough to act as a prison in the ordinary sense. They would be put in the rear of the ravi, while the sorcerers were carrying out their ceremonies in front. . . . If one could attract the guards to the front — could concentrate all attention there for just five minutes. . . .

I felt in my pocket for what I had stowed away, and considered.

Fire? No. I might creep underneath the ravi without being seen, but it was another matter to set fire to heavy, damp-soaked piles, without attracting notice. And if I did succeed in lighting some portion

of the supports or flooring, it would be seen and put out before any harm could be done. . . . No; the other way was best.

I inspected the small fire-pot I had brought with me, to avoid the necessity of striking matches. The hot brands were alive underneath the ashes. . . . It must be tried; there was no other way.

Back into the tangle of channels I pushed the canoe, and began threading my way with the utmost caution round to the rear of the ravis. The scene was weird enough to have delighted the heart of a Dante. The moon had climbed high overhead now, and through the dense roof of tangled creepers and orchids, her silver spears struck down into the depths of the inky water over which I glided. To right and left of the channel, the oozy mud was boiling with hideous life — crabs, water-snakes, things many-legged and horned, things feelered, carapaced, shining, lithe, without a name. On one side of the canoe stretched the trackless maze of the swamps: on the other, through the screen of bushes and low-growing palms, the sinister lights of the ravis burned like the mouth of hell. Once, as I swung abruptly round a turn into the dark, I saw the head of a monstrous alligator, streaked and rayed with green phosphorescence, rise out of the water; its eyes burned in the gloom like emerald lamps, and the double line of tusks in its extended jaws showed faintly white. . . . It was gone in an instant, but I bent to my paddle, and flew down the water-lane, for I knew that near a village, such monsters as this were bold enough to knock even a large

boat over, and pull the paddlers out, as a man might rip a row of peas from a shell.

There! that was the great ravi now, sloping down to the mud only a few yards away from me, the tall gable at the other end pricking the sky quite a long way away. At my end, there was a low wall of bark and split branches, raised above the mud on piles some six feet high; the roof came down to meet it at a sharply sloping angle. The chamber within must be small; it could not accommodate many guards. Were they there?

I slipped out of the canoe, and lay down flat upon the surface of the yielding slime, supported by a wide piece of planking I had brought for that purpose. Holding to this, and working my arms and legs, I succeeded in getting underneath the end of the ravi. Here I left the plank, and climbing up one of the supports, began very cautiously to make a hole in the floor with my knife.

It was not a difficult matter; the palm-sheaths gave way almost at once and my fingers slipped through. I put my eye to the opening, but the darkness within was complete. I listened. Somebody was breathing — two people were breathing — one asleep, and one, I thought, awake.

If these were natives, and I attracted their attention, my life, and what I valued infinitely more, that other life, would not be worth a minute's purchase. If they were whites, it was imperatively necessary to communicate with them and warn them of what I was going to do. Yet, how to manage it?

I could think of no plan but the risky one of putting my hand further through, and feeling about. Touch would certainly tell me what I wanted to know, and if I alarmed a cannibal guard by mistake — well, as Nelson said, something must always be left to chance. The risk had to be taken.

Very, very cautiously I slipped my fingers through, and touched — a hand.

I gritted my teeth together, and waited. In the front end of the ravi lights flashed to and fro, footsteps beat on the rickety floors, long chanting cries arose. Under the house, the crabs and water-snakes made a creeping noise. There was no other sound.

I reached up again, and clasped the hand firmly, and then my heart gave a jump, for I felt that it was bound — tied tightly round the wrist with a cord of native fibers. The fingers were small and slight, and stirred feebly in my hold. It was a left hand — a woman's hand — and on the third finger were two rings — one a heavy carved ring with a very large stone, the other a plain smooth band. . . .

I knew the rings — I knew the hand — and I knew that here, in the very shadow and maw of death, those hands that had been joined together in Port Moresby Mission Church, ten years ago, had met again at last.

One has no time for great emotions, when life is hanging by a thread; the discovery scarcely moved me at all. I was only anxious that my hand should be recognized as that of a white man and a friend, and I pressed the little fingers strongly. They answered as best they could.

Now, there is scarcely a girl in the world who does not know the schoolgirl alphabet of secret communication — one rap for A, two for B, and so on. I guessed that Stephanie (for I was as sure it was she as if I had seen her face) would not be different from the majority of her sex in this matter, and I began to rap, touching her fingers lightly.

"*Are you watched?*" I asked.

The fingers stirred, and feebly struck on mine fourteen times — then paused — then struck fifteen times.

"*No.*"

"*Who else?*" I rapped, economizing every useless word.

"*Worb* —" began the hand. I pressed it to show I understood.

"*Don't fear,*" I rapped. Our fingers met in a long, close pressure. Then I slipped my knife up through the opening, and very carefully cut the cord, first from one wrist, and afterwards from the other. I heard the faintest little whisper pass above my head, and then another hand, heavy and stout, was laid above the opening. I cut the bonds of this also and passed the knife through the opening. It was taken.

I still feared to speak, knowing the keen ears of the natives, and knowing that they could not be more than a few yards away; but I beat out on Stephanie's hand, "*Wait noise,*" and then dropped down into the mud again.

Like an eel I wriggled myself forward, underneath the floor of the ravi, which overhung my head some

five or six feet above me. Light began to show through the palm-sheaths after I had gone some way, and I could see the feet of natives passing up and down. The chanting had ceased; everyone seemed engaged in carrying things from place to place, and setting them in order. Of a sudden, as I looked and listened, all the movement ceased, and there was a great silence.

I liked this not at all, and I liked it less when one voice — probably that of the head sorcerer — rose in a loud droning monotone, evidently making a speech. From what I knew of man-eaters, this was likely to be the preliminary to the final act. There was no time to waste.

I carried the little fire-pot in my teeth; my fuse was cut and ready. I judged myself to be now almost at the front of the ravi, full four hundred feet from where Stephanie and Worboise were imprisoned. The charge was a small one — I trusted it would do no more than it was meant to.

Three lives hung upon my fingers as I put the stick of dynamite in its place, but I made no noise. The crackling of the fuse was very faint, and the droning voice of the sorcerer masked it completely.

I dropped back into the mud and made my way underneath the ravi again, a good deal faster than I had come. The fuse was a long one, and ought to give me time; still . . .

Underneath the far end again, I clung to the supporting posts, breathless, and listened, wondering the while how long I could stop there without being

picked up by an alligator; I knew there must be plenty about.

The droning voice of the sorcerer paused — went on again — rose to a higher pitch — and ceased. Then broke out a yell that set the hair crisping on my head. I began scrambling up the post, resolved at least to defend her as far as I could and die with her, if I could not save her — die after her, rather; I would see to that — when —

Crash! the fuse had not failed me after all. The ravi shook to its foundations. The forward gable leaped, burst, and splashed down into the river. Bits of palm-sheath, drums, shields, skulls and weapons went hurtling through the air. The sides of the ravi opened out like a basket struck by a sudden blow, and fell right and left in splintered ruins. A chorus of terrified howls arose out of the momentary silence that had followed the explosion, and then came a sound of popping and splashing, as if some giant were throwing handfuls of stones into the river. It was the men of Doravi, plunging, wild with terror, into the stream. Some, I had no doubt, were left behind, never to stir again; the charge was big enough to have killed a good many, though not so much by direct concussion as by the falling of the beams and pillars. In truth, it had been almost too large, for the far end of the ravi was badly shaken, and the roof there was within an ace of falling in.

I scarcely waited to see what damage had been done, before tearing aside the opening in the floor, and squeezing myself in.

"Worboise, can you move?" I whispered.

"Yes, I've cut myself and 'er quite free," came the answer.

"Stir yourself, then — I've given them a dose that's frightened them off for a bit, but there's no knowing they may not come back. Lower her through this opening to me; I'll get her to the canoe."

With some difficulty it was done, and Stephanie (who most fortunately had been tied up only an hour or two, and so was able to move) conveyed through the swamp to the canoe. I found it possible to support her on the plank, and, leaning on it myself, to work gradually along into the open water. I do not think that any other white man could have done so much without drowning himself or his charge, or both; but I had been two years in the Delta now, and had become almost as active in the swamps, on occasion, as the natives themselves, though the art which they possess of actually swimming in the semi-liquid slime still was beyond my powers.

To get Worboise through was another matter, and more than once we both came near suffocation. However, it was done at last, and I had them both safe in the canoe, which was a double one, meant for several paddles. Worboise was nearly as good a paddler as myself, allowing for the difference in age, and I promise you we made that dug-out go, once we were clear of the maze surrounding the town, where one had to turn and twist at every minute.

I scarcely cast a glance behind to see what the na-

tives were doing; I could hear, however, by the frantic cries and the wild beating of paddles, that they were rushing up and down the town, seeking the cause of the disaster, which no doubt they put down to some enemy assisted by attendant demons. The only thing I really feared was that they would seek safety in the open rivers, and so come upon us. They did not, however. We cleared the town and the maze unmolested, and reached the cutter safely.

The wind which had brought us down so easily was not a fair one for returning, and we had to beat our way back up the main stream, taking some hours on the way. All that time I never saw Stephanie's face. She lay in the tiny cabin, where I had put her on reaching the cutter, and slept the sleep of complete exhaustion. We had not spoken during the perilous journey in the canoe. That one clasp of the hand, and a few hurried words of encouragement, were all that had passed between us.

Worboise made up for any conversational omissions, however. The hardy old man was not a bit distressed by his short imprisonment, and he had the arrears of several years of silence to make up. His tongue never ceased, from the moment we boarded the cutter, until we reached the opening into Lynch's Lagoon. There, we transshipped again into the canoe, and he was silent.

For once, I had not grudged a word of what he said; I drank in every syllable. Many things were made clear in that slow sail up the river. Many mists

were rolled away from my life — from my life and Stephanie's.

. . . . . .

I helped her up the ladder, when we reached the house, and lit the lamp for her to go on.

"Worboise and I will stop outside on the veranda for a bit," I said. "You can tell us when you're ready for us. All my things are there; take what you want. We'll stop here to-night, and sail down to Daru or Yule Island to-morrow. You're as safe here as if you were in Windsor Castle; Doravi doesn't know anything, and if it did, three of us could hold the place for a year."

She went in without a word. Out on the veranda, Worboise and I sat and smoked and talked. The moon was sinking low; the palm and pandanus walls of the lagoon were shot with a weft of silver. I looked on the lake and the boat, and the one brown fortress house, with eyes of farewell. I knew that I should never see the moonlight on my Purari home again.

Garia, down in the canoe, was chewing betel-nut and looking up at the sky. I do not know what he was thinking of; but he laughed now and then.

It was waxing late, when a little movement at my elbow, like the fluttering wing of a bird, made me look up, and in the light streaming out across the veranda from the room behind, I saw — Stephanie.

She had taken a sky-blue flannel shirt of mine out of the box and put it on. She had, in some miraculous way, removed most of the stains of mud from

her skirt. She had piled her curly hair high on her head, and bound it with a gay silk tie — mine also. In the tired pallor of her face, her eyes shone like blue water-lilies; and her sweet mouth smiled — smiled as on that day so long ago, when we had stood together on the deck of the *Merrie England* and seen the white seas break into foam beneath our keel, to bear us on our wedding journey.

I opened my arms, and my bride came home.

I don't suppose it was more than a few seconds after that, when we, who had quite forgotten earth and all it contained, heard the sharp splash of paddles underneath the veranda, and the grumble of a discontented voice, fading further and further away — "Cutter . . . river . . . not wanted here. . . ."

Stephanie leaned over the rail, her eyes sparkling with laughter, and with something else.

"Oh, poor old man!" she said. "We've quite forgotten him!"

"Well, and if we have?" said I. "He isn't wanted!"

ENVOI

There is a rubber plantation, high up on the Astrolabe River, in the loveliest spot of the loveliest valley of all that lovely country. It has a handsome house, filled with books, with pictures, with dainty furniture and ornaments, all showing the care of a cultured hand. It has a great cool river, and a waterfall that sings all day and all night long. It has flowers and fruits as many and as fair as the Garden of Eden, and an Eve whom no angel would ever have had the heart to turn from the gates of Paradise. But there is no serpent there.

We are growing rich, or at least, we hope to, as Papua counts riches, some day. We are both of us more anxious about money matters than we used to be; there are reasons why we should be so. We do not need the world, nor care for it, but — others may.

The old book is finished. We keep it — for the future.

THE END

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